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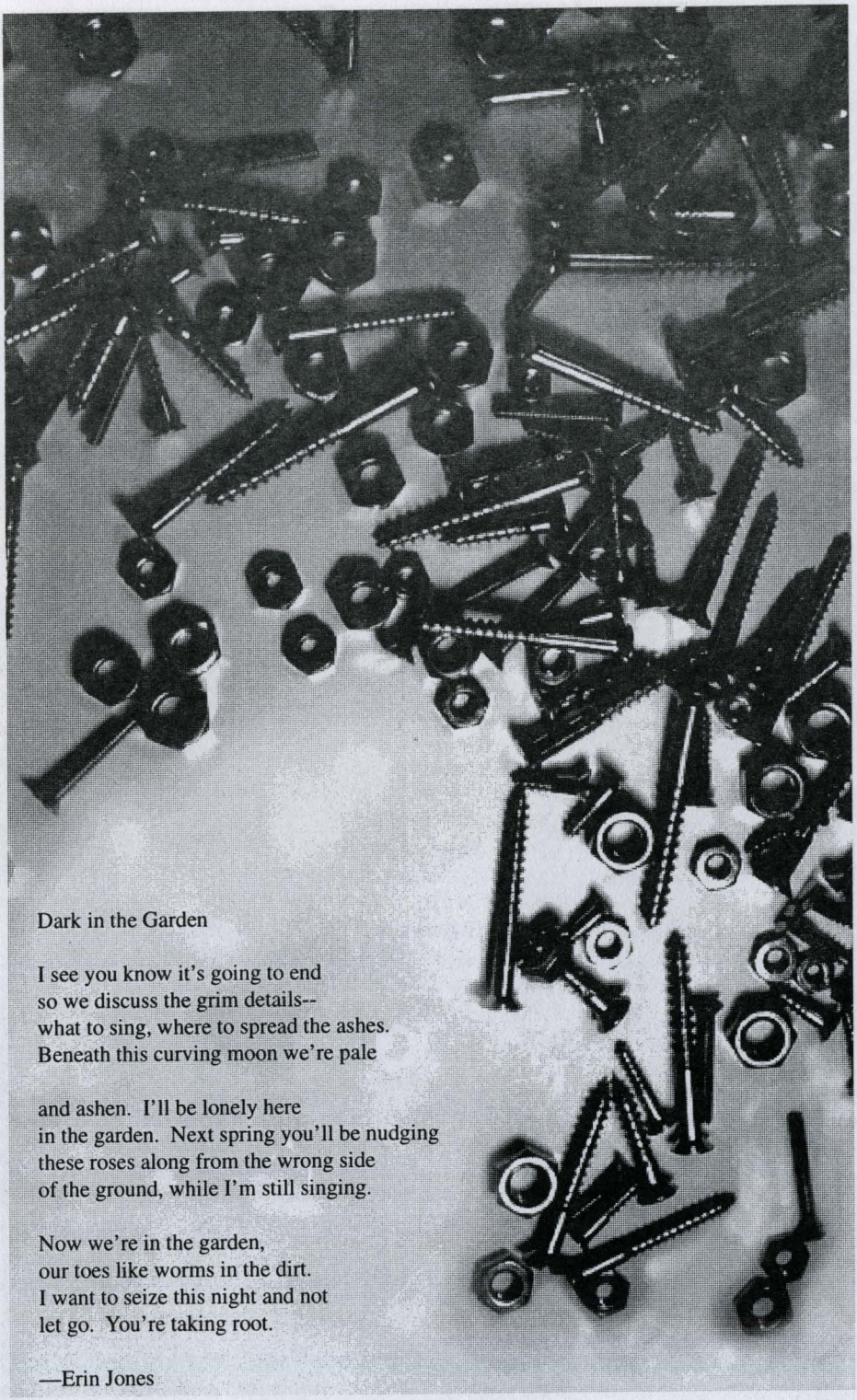

Dark in the Garden

I see you know it's going to end
so we discuss the grim details--
what to sing, where to spread the ashes.
Beneath this curving moon we're pale

and ashen. I'll be lonely here
in the garden. Next spring you'll be nudging
these roses along from the wrong side
of the ground, while I'm still singing.

Now we're in the garden,
our toes like worms in the dirt.
I want to seize this night and not
let go. You're taking root.

—Erin Jones

Shinjuku Thief

AN INTERVIEW WITH DARRIN VERHAGEN

by Matt Vanek

Darrin Verhagen's Shinjuku Thief has released some of the most diverse and exciting work in recent years. From the debut *Bloody Tourist* on Extreme Records in 1991 to the present, Thief has traveled down various musical paths, each one fully realized with a care and depth uncommon in any style of music.

While the *Bloody Tourist* dealt with world music, *The Scribbler*, inspired by Kafka, materialized with a soundtrack feel, much more in the vein of In The Nursery. For the release of the album, Verhagen took the opportunity to start his own label, the now well-known Dorobo, which became the permanent home of Shinjuku Thief as well as others such as TCH and Black Lung. Soon, the third Shinjuku Thief album, *The Witch Hammer*, was released on the fledgling label. *Hammer* stands as one of the most gripping, intense and emotional recordings that I have had the honor to hear. The epic feel of the album conjures images of the middle ages, when there were great deeds to be done. The dynamics of the whole work coupled with the numerous subtleties within each piece, such as soft scraping noises and barely audible voices, envelop the listener in an intricately crafted sonic world. *The Witch Hunter*, the second installment of the trilogy, focuses in on more delicate and folk-oriented compositions than appear in *Hammer*. While much of the raw power of the earlier work wanes, an certain refinement takes its place.

This more minimal direction is

currently where Darrin Verhagen is headed, as exhibited by the piece "Soft Ash" on the *Statics* compilation (CCI Recordings). Verhagen's attention to detail and mood along with his competence in composition sets his music above and beyond much of what is going on today. His early work is worth taking a listen to, but his newest work is, without a doubt, a must have.

When did you begin writing music? What kind of musical background do you have?

From an early age of piano lessons I was always keen in improvising and exploring stuff on the keyboard. My poor sight reading ability contributed to the development of my ear. Actual "composition" didn't really start until the upper high school level, when I began to refine and

ash international

Ash 3.9 decay - The European Compilation CD
Ash 3.5 scatter - The American Compilation CD
Ash 3.7 CM von Hausswolff - 'AS QUIET AS A CAMPFIRE or ANALOGUE MOTORIC AND ELECTRO MAGNETIC-SILENCE DISTURBED BY INTUITIVE SLUMBER' c/w 'MINGLING' or DODEKAPHONIC DRONES INTERFERED BY KNOWN AND UNKNOWN DIGITAL PHENOMENA' LP
Ash 3.6 chiky(u)u - The Japanese Compilation CD
Ash 3.4 Disinformation - 'Antiphony' 2 x CD
Ash 3.3 CM von Hausswolff & Leif Elggren - 'The Kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland National Anthem No. 1' CD
Ash 3.1 agents with false memories CD
Ash 2.9 Disinformation - 'R&D' CD
Ash 2.8/3.8 Bruce Gilbert - 'Instant Shed Volume II' 2 x 7"
Ash 2.6cd2 A Fault in the Nothing 2 x CD
Ash 2.5 Bernd Friedmann - 'Leisure Zones' CD
Ash 2.4 Daren Seymour & Mark Van Hoen - 'Aurobindo: involution' CD/LP
Ash 2.3 S.E.T.I. (Lagowski) - 'Knowledge' CD/LP
Ash 2.1 Record (an Ash International Sampler) CD
Ash 1.9 Runaway Train LP
Ash 1.8cd2 mesmervariations 2 x CD
Ash 1.8 mesmer LP
Ash 1.6 The Hafler Trio with the assistance of Adi Newton - 'Negentropy' LP
Ash 1.5 Lem Truggle - 'Breakout' MC
Ash 1.4 blind c/w fragment LP
Ash 1.3 H3ÔH - 'The Hafler Trio Bootleg' CD/EP
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develop some of my ideas. I actually took composition as part of my last couple of years of school. Whilst my (conservative) teacher was happy to encourage me with my George Winston-esque piano pieces, I think she was a little confused by the 7 cassette players in a room throwing up multitracked dark ambience. My training was in piano and clarinet in high school, with shakuhachi, gamelan and Ewe percussion following in University.

"...I think [my teacher] was a little confused by the 7 cassette players in a room throwing up multitracked dark ambience."

Where do you get inspiration and influence for your work?

As many of the Shinjuku albums would suggest, much of the inspiration for my work comes from history and literature. Generally, I find it much easier to work if there is a strong concept underpinning an album - helping to shape its musical direction. Thereafter, much of the musical material almost becomes a homage to the artists working in the field I've chosen (Hassell and Schütze for *Bloody Tourist*; Mertens, Nyman, Glass for *Scribbler*; FM Einheit, Laibach for *The Witch Hammer* and so on.)

How did the Shinjuku projects (both Filth and Thief) and Dorobo develop?

The label basically grew out of the "band." When there was no interest in releasing *Scribbler* from the likely suspects, we decided to release the album as an independent pressing. Seeing sales figures which actually eclipsed our debut on Extreme suggested the wisdom of continuing the label above and beyond that one-off. Shinjuku Thief itself has basically remained an outlet for me to work on styles of music which have interested me at the time. With the range of genres broadening, I started recategorising things - hence the Filth tag for the industrial dance, and the Darrin Verhagen "solo" idea for the more subtle *Soft Ash* project (due out in April).

Shinjuku Filth seems to be a return to some of the earlier musical forms and styles that you have since moved away from with Thief. How is your musical thought progressing?

Well, I guess it's a little misleading. The material on Filth's *Junk* was actually all composed around the time of the *Bloody Tourist* and *Scribbler* sessions. It basically just didn't fit into any of the projects we were working on at the time. It was released as a result of pressure from people who had heard bits and pieces via Australian radio airplay. We were actually as surprised as anyone that it has taken off to the extent it has. We'd always viewed it as our less serious side. So to see that as a "progression" I think is wrong. If anything, it's about the furthest away from the styles which interest me at the moment. Recently, I've been getting excited by the more minimal end of post-industrial (Ryoji Ikeda, Bernhard Gunter, etc.), the more

textural minimal end of post classical (Sofia Gubaidulina, Kanchelli, Cage's solo cello pieces, some of Nono's violin and multitrack tape works and the like).

Do your various musical endeavors

inform each other, or do you work on them differently?

I think the conceptual drive for each album varies greatly. *Bloody Tourist* was a swipe at safe white boy tribal ambience, *Scribbler* was an obtuse reduction of Kafka's *The Trial*, *The Witch Hammer* was a theatrical homage to early 20th century horror cinema, *Succulent Blue Sway* a lighthearted romp through technology via the dance medium, *The Witch Hunter* a subtle overview of folk tradition in the light of the church's systemisation and demonisation of all the "other" they could find, and *Soft Ash* a minimal overview of atmospheric inversions. Given that the technical approaches from album to album usually vary as much as the starting ideas, I find there's never too much overlap.

What does the future have in store for you with both musical and non-musical projects?

I guess the major determining factor there just comes down to the balance

between Dorobo and Shinjuku Thief. Unfortunately, the label commitments seem to steal much of the time I used to enjoy spending in the studio. Ideally, I'd like to reverse the trend and start spending more time on music again. Immediate plans include a Darrin Verhagen "solo" release in April [1997] (a dark ambient album based on a series of lethal atmospheric inversions, called *Soft Ash*), the third in the Shinjuku Thief witch trilogy: *The Witch Haven* (a subtle post-classical work), a couple of soundtracks - one for a theatrical production, the other for a film, a Professor Richmann minimal ambient techno release, and a subtle electroacoustic work called *New Music for Old Cultures (with Recent Artifacts)*.

Is there anything you would like to answer that you have never been asked?

Good question.....

steve roden/in be tween noise
splint (the soul of wood)
the new 3" cd ep

every sound on this recording was generated by rubbing, bowing, plucking, scratching, etc. a 1943 molded plywood splint designed by charles eames and manufactured by the evans products company. some of the sounds were recorded directly, some were manipulated and processed electronically.

absolutely no other objects, instruments, or sound generators were used in the making of this recording.

also avail. the first two full length cd's from in be tween noise:

so delicate & strangely made.

humming endlessly in the hush.

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box 36B16 LA CA 90036-1156
e-mail: sroden@deltanet.com

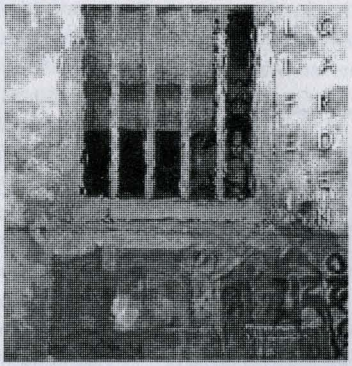
(our music is (our weap

DR

by Matt Mercer

Within the context of atmospheric music, Drone Records is one of the best experimental labels around. Based in Germany, Drone is dedicated to pressing 7" records of highly atmospheric, esoteric music.

Stefan Knappe began Drone in January of 1993 as an alternative to what he finds to be a capitalistic CD industry. He decided to run Drone as a 7"-only label: "Well, originally I wanted to build up a tape-label in 1992. [...] I wanted to do a tape-label called 'arcana' (because this notion had some meaning for me at that time, with high-quality releases (full colour-cover, etc...). But then I realized that there were simply too many labels around doing the same, and it would be very difficult to build up something really special. I always was a vinyl-lover and especially liked the sometimes unique covers often made in the experimental scene." The first release on Drone was a 7" by the well known German atmospheric unit Maeror Tri, of which Knappe is himself a member. "When we made plans to release our first vinyl 7" with Maeror Tri on our own, I got the idea of transforming the ideals of the tape-scene into a new vinyl-only label."



Since that first Maeror Tri 7", Knappe has gone on to release records by several different artists, both German and not, and always living up the standards he stressed originally. Each release falls into the distinguished genre of "non-entertaining music," but has enough substance and originality to stand alone. Knappe explained the term "non-entertaining music" to another zine (included in the press kit): "Throbbing Gristle talked of 'non-entertaining sounds' they were creating. I want to go further and talk of 'non-entertaining music.' 'Entertaining' means for me something that is pleasant, easy to hear, not challenging. Music that has commercial values, that makes your daily, suppressed life more easier to stand. 'Entertaining' music is music that is affirmative, that doesn't question our society/culture. If I state to release non-entertaining music I say that it's still music, but it has the contrary function and effect than normal music."

As "non-entertaining" as Drone's music is, the 20 or so releases have been somewhat successful. Several releases are already up for second editions of another 200 copies. Another plus to his marketing style is that most 7" releases come with handmade artwork courtesy of the recording artist. "The releases show that each band has very own ideas about how to create a cover... there have been ideas that couldn't have come to my own mind in my whole life. It shows that printing covers is not necessary, that there are many many ways to do it."

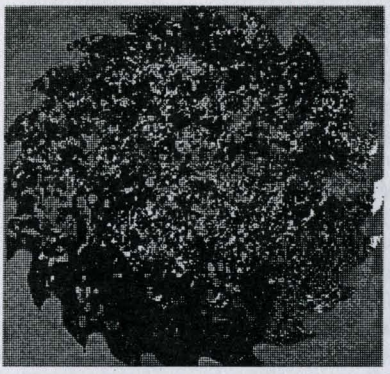
As its name implies, Drone's releases are primarily, well, droney. Fortunately, Drone has issued releases for a variety of experimental acts that are taking the term "drone" to new places. They run the gamut from minimal atmospherics and dreary, serene soundscapes to noisy, more disconcerting efforts.

Drone's best moments come from its most

on is our politics)
on)

ONE RECORDS

atmospheric, drone-oriented material. Italy's Bad Sector creates mesmerizing washes of synthesized sound, with a wall of tones that will inevitably absorb the listener wholly. Inade relies less on musicality and more on minimal soundscapes, with a deep dreariness about it. America's Yen Pox is one of the newer signings to Drone (one of few American outfits), whose 7" is probably the most minimal of the Drone discography, recalling the deep, dark sounds of PGR's album, *the chemical bride*. Hiltlahabuth creates sparse, unusual pieces of drone utilizing the didgeridoo along with more organic field-recorded sounds. Die Feinen Trinkers Bei Pinkels Daheim is an odd group that creates occasionally regular atmospherics with assorted noises and percussion thrown in... their 7" release, *Froschdosis*, is one of my favorites here.



On the other side of the spectrum, some of Drone's releases are what can only be described as "noise-drone." They serve up helpings of full, harsh sounds, but not in the way of the dynamic chaos that characterizes Japanese power electronics. And although Aube did release *Re-Chant* on Drone, it is a rather uninteresting piece of work. Møhr's *How to Make Darkness Visible* features two sides of synthesized noise, with assorted clatter and tinkering in the background. Unfortunately, as soon as the source becomes obvious, the overly synthetic nature of the sounds somewhat detracts from the attempted aesthetic. S*Core, one of Drone's only Japanese signings (other than Aube, who has probably released something on every known record label and more), is the most typical noise artist, opting for a shrill, wall-of-noise effect, which surprisingly works. It works particularly well in this case because of its label. Since Drone is presenting its audience "non-entertaining music," it doesn't bother me at all that the music doesn't change much. In fact, that's precisely why I like it!

Some of the artists on Drone are actually (gasp!) musical, such as the aforementioned Bad Sector, Indiana's Abner Malaty, and Contrastate. Abner Malaty's creations are quite strange, with hints at structure that give way to weird sounds and atmospherics. Contrastate is the only artist to include vocals, although they usually operate far more effectively without them. Para-Noise Terminal features a side of more free noise against a side of rhythmic motion. America's Big City Orchestra present their audience with *A Children's Garden of Noise*, a totally inane and aggravating listening experience. It's definitely amusing the first time, but beyond that initial humor it serves only to take up space.

All in all, Drone Records is offering an alternative to music it feels has become too enamored with itself. It serves to break down the intellectual barriers that pervade the music industry, to bring to a baser nature the pure artistry of sound. I highly recommend contacting the label and investigating their oft-overlooked discography!

J.G. Thirlwell has been making music for almost twenty years now. From the first appearance of his many Foetus guises, he has continually shattered conceptions of music by drawing in influences, reinterpreting them in new and unfamiliar ways and adding his own distinct style of dry lyricism to create an uncompromising but highly innovative whole.

Hailing from Australia, Thirlwell relocated to England in the early 80's but managed to already establish a reputation for himself simply by his choice of recording identities. Reflecting the bitter sarcasm of his lyrics, Thirlwell began to release records under a variety of aliases, all including the Foetus core: Scraping Foetus Off the Wheel, the Foetus All Nude Review, Foetus Interruptus, Foetus Inc., Foetus Art Terrorism, Foetus Over Frisco, Foetus Under Glass, Philip & His Foetus Vibrations and—possibly the most tasteless name in music history—You've Got Foetus on Your Breath.

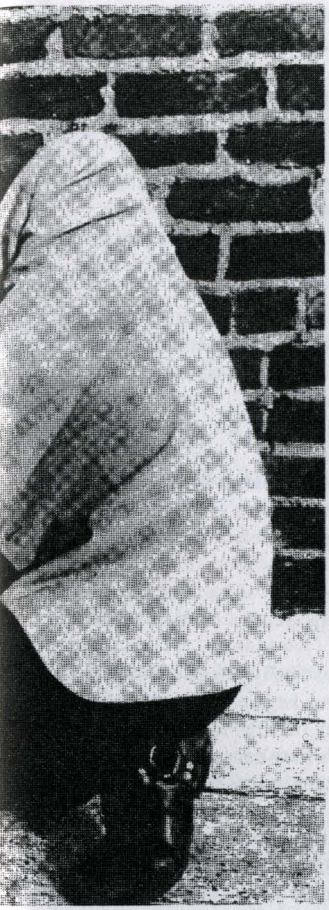
Despite the shocking names, Foetus delivered an infectious blend of harsh industrialism and irresistible dance music, in a way that no one had before and no one ever will. *Deaf*, released by You've Got Foetus on Your Breath in 1981, included the single "Wash It All Off," with its chorus refrain of "Super-cali-fragilistic-sado-masochism!" Scraping Foetus Off the Wheel, having released the two seminal albums *Hole* and *Nail* in 1983 and 1984 respectively, remains some of his most essential and groundbreaking work, with a frenzied craze that barely remains under control amidst the clatter of metal and beat box rhythms.

Amidst his array of Foetus pseudonyms, Thirlwell (disguised sometimes as Clint Ruin) also managed to complete collaborations with Marc Almond (ex-Soft Cell) on the Flesh Volcano project, with Roli Mossiman in Wiseblood and Lydia Lunch (the *Stinkfist* and *Don't Fear the Reaper* EP releases).

Despite several side projects, collaborations and live releases, Foetus itself had not released a proper studio album since the thunderous *Thaw* (Foetus Interruptus) in 1988.

After the long hiatus, Thirlwell signed to a major label for the first time to record the monumental *Gash* for Columbia. *Gash* remains Thirlwell's most "accessible" album, working from a very song-oriented approach and incorporating a rock edge that makes its music immediately more relatable to mainstream culture. However, the lyrics and sounds on *Gash* are just as immediately personal, with a subtle anguish running

JIM THIRLWELL A SYMPHONY



throughout Thirlwell's dry lyrics. Shortly after the release of *Gash*, Columbia severed its ties with Thirlwell, and he signed to Thirsty Ear, who has since been making available his formerly elusive backcatalogue.

Now Jim Thirlwell presents to his listeners the Foetus Symphony Orchestra. And once again, Foetus has managed to surprise, and to an extent disappoint many of his fans. The new album, *York* , swirls with improvisational noise and free jazz feeling music tied together largely by friend and long time collaborator Lydia Lunch's unique spoken word. The live concert, where *York* was recorded, was panned across the board due to the huge separation between this and older Foetus material. However, when one pushes past the initial reaction, the realization sets in that this is truly an experimentation in sound and structure, one that Thirlwell has never before attempted. While the disc may not be in any way comparable with other Foetus projects, in the same way that the rock styling of *Gash* went unappreciated at the time of its release, Thirlwell brings to the project his talent and ingenuity, creating a difficult but rewarding listen for the audience.

Mr. Thirlwell was nice enough to stay late in order to squeeze in an interview with me when I am sure he would have rather been on his way home. Unfortunately, the answering machine recorded the interview taped it very quietly, which made him almost inaudible at times. I have done my best to piece together the interview, though at times I have had to add editor's notes approximating what was said.

Okay, first question for some background on the album: how did the Foetus Symphony Orchestra come about?

[It was] a long slow process of living in D.U.M.B.O. and the kind of realization of that with a lot of different elements that came together. I don't know how to start. Lydia [Lunch] was talking about doing... I mean, over the years we have done spoken word, illustrated spoken word pieces, and she was talking about that. And I was like, "Look, I want to do something with you." And I had the opportunity to work at the Anchorage in Brooklyn which I had always wanted to record something at. And the concept just kind of coalesced more by my volition then hers because they approached me about doing something and I didn't want to [just] play a Foetus show. I wanted to do something special, and something that utilized

ND THE FOETUS ORCHESTRA

by Matt Mercer and Matt Vanck
Interview conducted via phone
by Matt Vanck

the size of the space which has [natural] reverberation because of the stones. And I always wanted to record something there.

What about the other people that were involved? They improvised over top of what you had...?

That came about totally another of so many different elements that came together at once and was timing, timing, timing, you know. I decided to use that all at once and [with] these people that I wanted to play with at the time, people who had not played together at any one time. It was weird, you know, pulling together the people.

So then, the music was written by you beforehand and then improvised at the show?

It was written by me beforehand and then I pulled in people to my house, and I taught them the themes melodically. I came up with librettos and then said, "Okay, you come in here and do it." And I taught them the musical themes and then it went from there. I like the idea of the juxtaposition of randomness and discipline at the same time so I worked with that. The first time that people had met each other was at the concert, so I thought that was a really intriguing way to approach doing something like that. And in that way it was the most ambitious thing I have ever done. It was a challenge, you know. It was a [dream] that I had and a big departure because it was nothing I had done before.

Are you happy with the results, musically speaking?

Yeah, I am. I think I took the ball and ran with it, you know. I think that it's something very different and very naughty.

When comparing it with your last album, *Gash*, which is really musical, and very...

Well, it shouldn't be judged with the same criteria as *Gash* or any other Foetus studio album.

I was just surprised when I popped it in. I looked on the back and saw all these horns. I was expecting jazz stuff or big band or something... I don't know.

No, It's not "song" songs. It's got a different criteria, you know.

Don't get me wrong, I think it's great.

Oh, you like it?

Yeah, I actually absolutely do.

I mean, I think it's really good. It was, to me, the most progressive and scary thing I ever did, and I almost backed out of it like five times.

Really?

Yeah. I mean I was totally scared about doing it because to take on a large ensemble like that and pull something like that together. It's very scary. And also it's very conceptual.

How long did it take you to write the themes?

It took months.

Did you write with Lydia... her writing the lyrics or did you write the music first?

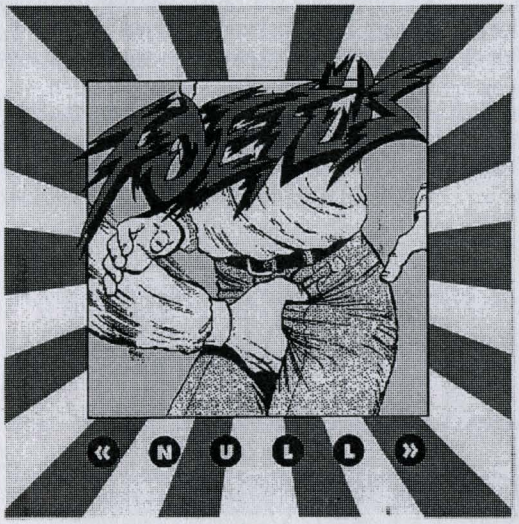
No, she would fax me stuff and then I would cross out stuff, and then in the live experience I would poke her with my tin whistle and say, "Shut the fuck up," and then move on from there. The show became my baby. It's totally a different baby from everything I have done before.

Absolutely.

To me, I look at *Gash* and compare *Gash* and *York*, and *Gash* is like my *Sgt. Pepper's*, and then I've got *Null and Void* which came out on Cleopatra. It's like there is no comparison.

Would you do it again in the future? Do you see yourself incorporating some of this?

Sure, I'd do something... I don't like to say this is like that and that's like that. I would do something like that again. But it would be different. It would be totally different. There wouldn't be another



The promo version of Null, the EP accompaniment to Gash which was never publicly released after Columbia dropped Foetus. It has since been repackaged with the likewise unreleased Void EP by Cleopatra Records.

York again in much the same way that there is not going to be another *Gash* again. There is never going to be another *Hole* or *Nail* or *Null and Void*. Everything I do is a progression. Not even a progression, but taking something similar in the same way that... That's it, you know. Next time it might be [something else].

Do you have any plans for the future as far as Foetus is concerned?

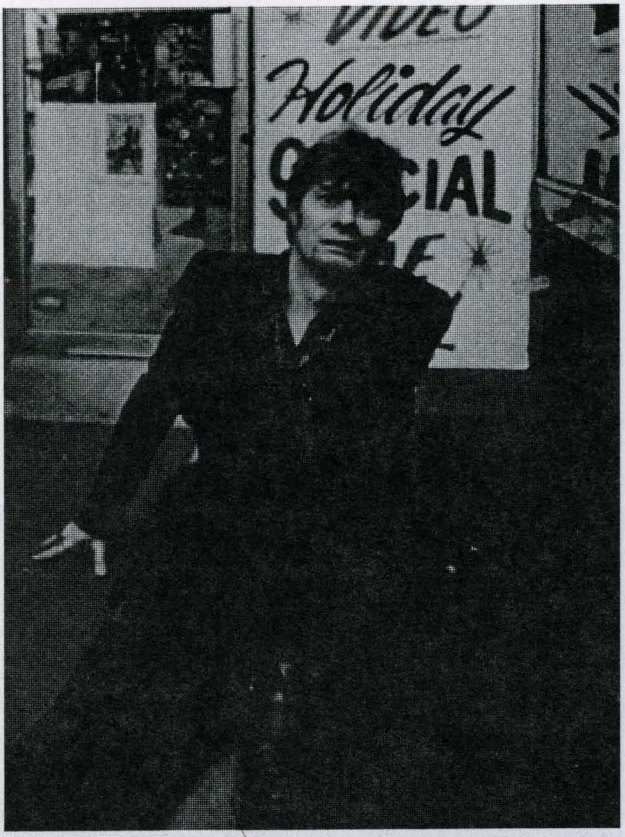
I am working on a new album right now.

I read something about a book. What can you tell me about that?

Well, the book is called *Foetus* which is 12 x 12 with a 10 x 10 vinyl... coloured vinyl. And that will be out next year, hopefully, or the year after.

Is it a history?

It's 112 pages with 36 pages in full color, and that's how far I have gotten. It is in progress.



How do you feel after leaving Columbia and having *Gash* put out on a major and going into the first year after that. How do you feel about the label situation. You said once that labels were pretty much the same, do you still feel that way?

Yes. I mean, I think [it is a problem with Columbia, not labels in general, but I do not want to go into it]. I could, but it's a lot of political brouhaha about what was involved with *Gash* and I am really not in the mood to do that right now. But I feel betrayed definitely. I can tell you about *Gash* really shorthand if you want.

Sure.

Well, it wasn't my fault. It wasn't Columbia U.S.'s fault. It came down from the Japanese. And when it came down, it was like two weeks after the album came out. And two weeks before I went on tour. And I felt totally betrayed. I felt totally betrayed. My relationship with Columbia was I went through two different A&R people, both of whom got fired during the interim of being on Columbia and having *Gash* come out. And it was a huge project for me. And I felt totally betrayed by them. And it wasn't the fault of people at American Columbia. All I can say is I blame Michael Jackson. It's totally true.

How so?

Because he totally [sold out]. So that's my answer. It is totally Michael Jackson's fault.

Where do you think you fit in the greater scheme of things? You are connected with the industrial music scene though that is not a good category to throw it into, especially now. Where do you think you sit in everything?

Well, that's a real dichotomy, I don't consider myself as part of anything. If anywhere, I would say, I am the king. I AM THE KING!

purity

walking back in the twilight
i feel the chill of my solitary frame
battle the snow and cold
i look up and notice
for the first time
the beautiful fat flakes falling
through the trees
reminding me of
antique black and white
super 8 footage from when i was a kid
falling, falling, falling
i stop fighting
i'm not so lonely anymore

lust

too shy to admit how i feel
too proud to admit i'm human
it's not wise to be human
unless you're stronger
then i am

identity

if i was an animal
i'd be a dragon
expansive silver-gray translucent wings
ebony bone and trim
powerful lungs and heart
to thrust the body into graceful flight
armor of smooth razor scales
calm, patient, thoughtful, endangered
just waking from slumber

hope

you don't know me
but maybe someday we'll meet
i'll be the one
who won't talk to anyone

erin antognoli

music reviews

(All reviews are rated 1 to 10 relative to one another to further establish a value system. Separate authors have different tastes, and reviews reflect this accordingly.)

AKITA/ASUMA/HASWELL/SAKAIBARA
Ich Schnitt Mich In Den Finger (Mego LP)
Masami Akita, the mastermind behind Merzbow, has released something new... again. This time it is a collaboration with Reiko Azuma, Russell Haswell and Tetsuo Sakaibara on the German Mego label. Akita's usual intense feedback and extreme walls of sound are almost nonexistent on this release. Instead, the release creates a shallow stirring of noise complete with squeals, groans and blips, but it never reaches the level of harshness, seriousness or intensity we have come to expect with his release. Merzbow fans may be disappointed.
Rating: 5 (MV)

AMBER ASYLUM
The Natural Philosophy of Love (Release CD)
Amber Asylum creates moody, atmospheric music in the vein of the 4AD roster of old. Centered around Kris Jones, the project operates heavily on textures supplied through acoustic guitar and violin, with soaring, angelic vocals from Jones herself. The best moments of this release are its darkest, namely "Looking Glass" and its vocalized reprise. However, the entire album stands apart from the majority of Release bands', with an anguished sorrow that flows through the listener.
Rating: 8 (MM)

ASHTRAYHEAD
Ashtrayhead (Invisible CD)
Ashtrayhead is the bizarre alter-ego of Marc Heal, better known as the leather-clad vocalist of Brit electro-rockers Cubanate. This is a welcome change from the rockier side of Cubanate, blending harsh aggro industrial stylings with hard techno sounds. The sound is almost (if not completely) synthesized, with repetitive, heavily affected vocal lines... but that's okay, because he's not saying anything very important anyway. Ashtrayhead is an outlet for all that's lewd and obnoxious (not quite taken to the decibel extremes of, say, Klute, though) and makes for an actually good release. It's unintelligent but sounds good...
Rating: 7 (MM)

ATARI TEENAGE RIOT
Burn, Berlin, Burn! (Grand Royal/DHR CD)
A new charmer from Alec Empire, Carl Crack and Hanin Elias comes our way. The music of ATR is hard to describe to someone who hasn't heard it yet. To merely say that "well it's sort of like gabber meets punk" is a reasonable description, but it doesn't prepare the listener for impact upon pressing the play button. Trashy, processed heavy metal guitar riff samples scurry in rhythm with pounding, furiously fast distorted kicks and squealing 303 loops, with distorted, shrill screaming on top. Perhaps the driving force behind ATR's music is its politics, with a die-hard straight-edge slant and vehemently anti-fascist sentiments. The lyrics sometimes rhyme, but half the time they don't at all, and only occasionally is this record danceable whatsoever. For those disenchanted with the commercialization of punk, turned off by the exploitation of techno/electronica and dissatisfied with the current state of affairs of the world, Atari Teenage Riot offers an alternative, all the while giving the collective community the finger.
Rating: 8 (MM)

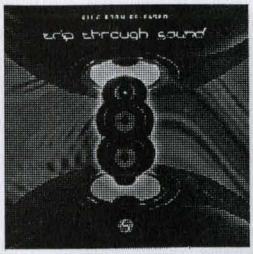
ATTRITION
Etude (Projekt CD)
This release marks the arrival of a long-anticipated project between Attrition and a member of the Parisian Orchestra, Franck Dematteis. Dematteis offered the idea of classical interpretations of Attrition songs to Martin Bowes, who thought it to be a great idea, and this is the result. Unfortunately, I can't say too much about the interpretations because I haven't heard very much of Attrition's backcatalogue. However, it is very nice and for the most part flows well. Vocalist Julia Walker (who works with Attrition sometimes) sometimes ruins otherwise good music with an aggravating staccato style (as found in Purcell's "Cold Genius" piece, the only non-Attrition song). A must have for Attrition fans I would imagine, as well as those interested in neoclassical mood music.
Rating: 8 (MM)

BISK
Strange or Funny Ha-Ha? (Sub Rosa CD)
I was hitherto unfamiliar with this Japanese project. Naohiro Fujikawa creates bewildering compositions of electronic madness. All the songs on *Ha-Ha* are heavily processed, taken apart, put back together and then some. I've never heard anything quite like this... touches of drum & bass mesh with funky dub beats, found sounds, erratic time signatures, hints at meter that never last long enough to consider any of these pieces very "regular." This is essential for anyone who finds the majority of drum & bass and dub to be too boring. An electronic cut-up masterpiece for the short of attention span.
Rating: 8.5 (MM)

BLACK LUNG
The Disinformation Plague (Metropolis CD)
David Thrussell's third full-length solo album as Black Lung finally sees the light of day domestically, this time on Metropolis. This one is much more similar to *The Depopulation Bomb* (his second album, available on Fifth Colvmn) than the debut, *Silent Weapons for Quiet Wars*. The sound is incredibly cold and digitized, almost devoid of feeling. Occasionally the machines themselves begin to live with pulsing rhythms and strange sounds. Apparently this release's political focus is the AIDS epidemic, with curious liner notes accompanying this difficult music. As is the case with all of David Thrussell's work, this is essential.
Rating: 8 (MM)

Various Artists
ARTCORE 3 (React DCD)

This release is available in two formats: one continuous mix CD and one unmixed double disc set. I picked up the double disc for more material and an unmixed format as a change of pace (it seems just about every compilation out there is mixed these days!). The subhead to the title of this disc is "Expressions in Drum & Bass," which is just what it is. It takes drum & bass and gives it a certain ambience and atmosphere usually absent. Surprises include heavy reworkings of Garbage ("Milk," remixed by Goldie) and St. Etienne ("The Sea"). Overall, a strong collection of cuts from artists such as Ken Ishii, Doc Scott, Ed Rush, Danny Breaks, Dave Wallace, Peshay, Nookie and more. Highly recommended.
Rating: 9 (MM)



Various Artists
BLUE ROOM RELEASED VOL. I (Blue Room CD)
This compilation showcases the many trance bands signed to Blue Room. Some such as Juno Reactor are well known, but some of the better cuts come from the other more unknown acts; Etnica and Cydonia contribute my favorite tracks. There's not really too much else to say about the disc... It does little to break out of the genre which it's nailed down pretty well. Those heavily into trance techno may enjoy this, even if it gets a little tedious after a while.
Rating: 7 (MM)

BLUNT FORCE TRAUMA
Bled Out (Malsonus CD)
Jonathan Canady (Dead World, Death Pile) and Scott Candey (Gruntsplatter, Sinderskin) have two things in common. They both enjoy making noise and they both have terribly large egos. Well, okay, maybe I am being unfair. The person who wrote up the bio is the one with the ego, and since I don't know which is at fault, they will both take the blame. This American noise duo is trying to compete with the noise coming out of Japan. I suppose that no one told them that the race to create the harshest noise has already been won. Perhaps someone should also tell them that they are not really all that harsh. *Bled Out* is full of tracks that, while they have fluctuations, high pitched squealing voices, and other changes within them, really just come off as a blast of constant, fairly regular, electronically overprocessed noise. I would not say that is a bad thing necessarily. But many Japanese noise outfits have already created what Blunt Force Trauma is out to build. The CD is not bad and definitely listenable. I find the constant noise quite restful, in fact. However, an "unparalleled experimental noise masterpiece" it is not!
Rating: 6.5 (MV)

C.J. BOLLAND
The Prophet (ffrr UK CDEP)
This import CD-single is essential for fans of hard house and trance. C.J. Bolland has grown to become one of the most respected figures in this genre (and made a splash into the mainstream with his ultra-quirky "Sugar Is Sweeter"), and his new song, "The Prophet," does nothing but support it. Unfortunately, only two mixes of this hard, fast anthem are included, the original and its house counterpart. The Armand Van Helden remix of "Sugar Is Sweeter" appears to round out this brief but good release... What are you waiting for?
Rating: 8 (MM)

Various Artists
CALIFORNIADRUM&BASS (Sub Base USA CD)
This is a compilation of some new drum & bass work from the west coast. This disc's sound lies firmly in drum & bass's hip hop roots, with a lot of scratching and MC sort of tricks and a continuous mix of artists such as Embee, Joker, Remarc, Swift, Dope Skillz and more. Most of the cuts here aren't as subtle as some of the other work being done, but they represent the scene effectively.
Rating: 7 (MM)

CAUL
Crucible (Malignant CD)
The third release from the small, independent label Malignant comes from Caul. The music found on *Crucible* is some of the most emotive, effective atmospheric instrumental recording I've yet heard. There is an almost pathetic quality to the dreariness of *Crucible*, with slow, melancholy washes of strings and drones, all of which flow

together seamlessly throughout this incredible recording. I'm at times reminded of HOEDh's *Hymnus* album, only this is done so much better that it's surprising in its ingenuity in what can often be a paint-by-numbers genre.
Rating: 9 (MM)

Various Artists
COLD CRUSH CUTS (Ninja Tune DCD)
This disc collects a variety of trip hop acts as mixed by DJ Krush and Coldcut & DJ Food Fight. At its best moments, this set features songs in the strung out, acid jazz gone stoned way, although some of the material is too hip hop for my liking (London Funk Allstars). And while I don't find the DJ mixing to be up to the standard of other recordings, there are some memorable cuts from Coldcut, DJ Vadim, The Herbaliser and DJ FOOD.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

CONTROLLED BLEEDING
Gilded Shadows (Hypnotic CD)
The newest effort from Controlled Bleeding is a collaboration between Paul Lemos and Joe Papa. While their first Hypnotic release, *Inanition*, was promoted as ambient-dub, *Gilded Shadows* hits the mark more obviously, with drum loops, booming bass lines, atmospherics and a few surprises! Don't expect a boring album here; remember who you're dealing with! There are surprises of noise, jazz, heavy metal guitars and more mixed into a sleek, smooth dub package. Not as essential or as mesmerizing as *Inanition*, but another strong showing from Controlled Bleeding.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

CROCODILE SHOP
Pain (Metropolis CD)
Crocodile's second release for Metropolis (only a year after their first) shows the group experimenting with their sound. The majority of *Pain* doesn't sound too much like their last album *Beneath*, but rather it all has more of a beat and more of a groove. One quality that gives Crocodile Shop a good sound is the very same one that ruins other groups' recordings: overproduction. The vocals are so affected that they absorb you (sounding like a disembodied Peter Murphy meets Gary Numan). The arrangements sometimes leave much to be desired, particularly when you hear that annoying orchestra hit sound from the same keyboard in *four* different songs. However, there's something irresistible about the accessibility of Crocodile Shop these days that makes me overlook the annoyingly synthetic bass lines and cheesy arrangements. Dare I call it catchy? I think so.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

CURRENT 93
Horsey (World Serpent CD)
I have long anticipated the reissue of *Horse*, the 1990 LP only available in a boxed set split with Nurse With Wound and Sol Invictus. The impressive dirge of "Diana" on *Emblems* sucked me in and the live version of "Death of The Corn" made me think the studio version would be incredible. However, the album is far from what I was expecting. It seems Mr. Tibet had to get some rock star preening out of his system. Heavy guitars churn around on all but the aforementioned tracks, including two very similar versions (even though one is supposedly "previously unreleased") of "Broken Birds Fly" and the song "Tree." The title track is a reworking of "Hooves," a song available in its most impressive form on Emblems. I think over the years they have done this song to death, and unfortunately each time it is less and less likely to revive. If you are a completist, you will probably be getting this album anyway. If not, I recommend any other Current 93 album.
Rating: 6 (MV)

Various Artists
CYBERPUNCTURE (United Endangered Front CD)
Umm... Excuse me, but who are these United Endangered Front people and why do they want to torture us poor, unsuspecting reviewers? I don't know what to say to do this release justice. Any negativity will just not be enough. Electronic industrial/gothic rock has never seen this level of consistently bad programming, cheap sounds and underproduction. The worst of it is that *Cyberpuncture* is a compilation! They must have gone out of their way to scrape the bottom of the proverbial barrel in order to come up with such horrors as Danos, Fear Cult, and the infamously terrible Northwestern Electro Coalition band Noxious Emotion. Avoid this at all costs... Your ears will thank you.
Rating: 2 (MV)

DAFT PUNK
Homework (Virgin CD)
Certainly every music magazine in the world has said something about Daft Punk. What I don't understand is why everyone loves it. The music on *Homework* is simple and

boring. The duo boasts of recording the majority of the album in their bedroom, and its sound is just that: bedroom techno. A simple, unchanging 4-4 bass beat and occasional knob twisting do not a good album make, sorry. The only saving grace of *Homework* is its consistent attention to humor. It gives the songs a playful feel, saving them from coming across as just plain, well, dumb. "Da Funk" and "Around the World" are singles (the former being the definite highlight of the album), and they're pretty representative of the album as a whole. If you like it, then by all means, dig in.
Rating: 6 (MM)

THE DARK BACKWARDS
Unreserved (CD)
This one-man project is a blend of techno and pop. The music is layered, laid back and well written, with buried vocals spread throughout. The vocals are difficult to understand, and so act as an instrument adding its own sound and texture. Frankly, it is good that the lyrics are difficult to understand, because they tend to be somewhat trite and overdone. Hopefully The Dark Backwards will continue writing music in the future, but may want to rethink some of the lyrical content. This is solid music with a lot of promise.
Rating: 7 (MV)

DEAD VOICES ON AIR
How Hollow Heart... (Invisible CD)
This DVOA disc is a series of live improvisations in which Mark Spybey (ex-:zoviet*france:) was accompanied by Gerald Belanger, Christopher Drost, Heiki Sillaste and Sheldon Drake. Sounds come off as very synthesized or manipulated, but the recording sounds very "live" and organic. The common link between these five pieces is that they all fall into a deep drear; two of the more subtle and developed pieces exceed 20 and 30 minutes. Drum loops are used sparingly and in heavy reverb ("My Wreath is of Red Jewels") to much success. Perhaps it is the technology and recording technique that makes this recording work, giving it a very chilling feeling not unlike the effect of Lab Report's work (albeit a different sound). The tension found in this recording is at times impressive because it is so minimal. Mark Spybey has released another gem in his fourth album. Recommended.
Rating: 8.5 (MM)

Various Artists
DEEP HOUSE U.K. (DM CD)
This twenty track compilation appeared to be a decent collection of heavy house music. However, the cheese factor here is off the meter for most of it, and what the listener is treated to instead is a whole lotta diva and not much substance. There are a few standouts, such as Logo's "Cool the Fire" and Must's "Gotta Get (Loose)," but the majority of it is boring and uninspired. Avoid it.
Rating: 4 (MM)

DELERIUM
Euphoria (Firefly) (Nettwerk CDEP)
This is the first single from the outstanding *Karma* album. Unfortunately, the remixes present on this short single, courtesy of Rabbit in the Moon, aren't up to the standard I expected. The are exactly what the names imply, however: "Gothic Disco Mix" and "Gothic Disco Dub." The extra production by Rabbit in the Moon does little to make the song better, although when used with the lyrics and chorus from the original (featuring Single Gun Theory's Jacqui Hunt) the song does take on a life of its own. The only advantage to this single I found was the price, as it's under $3. The disappointment didn't seem so bad when I realized it wasn't going to break my wallet. My advice? Get the full length; you won't regret it.
Rating: 6.5 (MM)

DELERIUM
Karma (Nettwerk CD)
The new Delerium from Bill Leeb and Rhys Fulber continues in the direction pursued a couple years ago with their Nettwerk debut, *Semantic Spaces*. It appears that the stark dark ambience of old has completely disappeared. But as with *Semantic Spaces*, the warm atmosphere and Enigma-esque arrangements of *Karma* grew on me. Guest vocals from Kristy Thirsk (Rose Chronicles), Sarah McLachlan and even samples of Lisa Gerrard (Dead Can Dance) are sure to help sell this, and they do for the most part enhance the music. Some of the ethnic elements and samples start to become clichéd, but when they blend in with Leeb/Fulber's knack for sequencing and any vocals/ lyrics contributed by guest artists, *Karma* pulls it off very nicely. The album is very long and difficult to sit through sometimes, because the last few songs (while still good) begin to drag. While quite a departure from the Delerium of old, *Karma* is a great album and worth looking into for fans of the ethno-ambient sound, with a twist. (On a side note, Hypnotic has made available the Delerium backcatalogue domestically!)
Rating: 8.5 (MM)

DIVE

Snakedressed (Daft CD)

Some Dive fans expressed concern at the accessibility of 1993's *Concrete Jungle* as a follow up to the brutal *First Album* and *Final Report* releases. After recording the bleak ambient *Grinding Walls* release with Sigillum S, Dirk Ivens returns in full force with *Snakedressed*, one of the best truly industrial albums in a long time. The structure and songlike quality of *Concrete Jungle* resurfaces here, but this time buried under a wall of noise and sound. Melodies subside to allow more developed, noisy rhythm tracks, plus of course Ivens' disembodied snarls. Ivan Iusco lends a hand on several tracks, making them more full and less monotonous, a pitfall of Dive's earlier work. An all out aural assault, *Snakedressed* is certainly one of the best releases so far this year.

Rating: 9.5 (MM)

DEUTSCH NEPAL

¡Comprendido! Time stop! ...and world ending (Release CD)

This domestic release follows the music of the Swedish project from 1992 to 1996. Deutsch Nepal was always one of my favorite Cold Meat Industry projects from the moment I heard *Benevolence* upon its 1992 release. Its title cut opens up *¡Comprendido!*, and it's followed by an array of dark tracks, most of which are previously unreleased (to the best of my knowledge). The sound is dark and dense, blending ambience with a certain sinister quality that makes it distinctly Deutsch Nepal. Release has done a good job uncovering this great experimental project and making it available at a domestic price!

Rating: 7.5 (MM)

DILATE

Octagon (Hypnotic CD)

Coming from Vampire Rodents' Victor Wulf is the new Dilate album. Dilate creates music that could cure insomnia. Fortunately this is not because it's tedious or boring, but rather because it's so thoroughly restful. The music of *Octagon* teeters between dark and light, warm and cold. Once it begins to set in, however, it lulls you into a trance, and your eyes grow progressively heavier. Just what the doctor ordered!

Rating: 8 (MM)

DJ SHADOW

Endtroducing..... (Mowax CD)

BELIEVE THE HYPE. That's the most important thing to keep in mind when you come across DJ Shadow's first full length mix CD. He takes spinning and sampling to new heights with this release, which carries both the trancelike lull of trip hop but also injects it with the passion and soul of old school hip hop. Never is this disc boring. Every cut has something worthwhile to offer, especially "Building Steam with a Grain of Salt," "Stem/Long Stem," "Midnight in a Perfect World" (the single which is gaining serious momentum now) and "The Number Song." Believe the hype and pick this one up... You won't be disappointed!

Rating: 9 (MM)

DJ WALLY

DJ WAlly's Genetic Flaw (Liquid Sky CD)

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I should probably begin by saying that I have a soft spot for the music of Chopin. His is indeed some of my very favorite music. Then it's no surprise that I immediately fell in love with "Space People," the sixth track on this disc (the first single), which makes use of a strategic loop of one of Chopin's preludes. The rest of the CD follows suit, with a thudding, resonant trip hop drum loop and booming bass. A few of the tracks miss the mark, such as "Japaneez Wine" and "Ricco's Love," which attempt to be more ambient-experimental and don't work, but the majority of this is dense, heavy trip hop to chill to. It lacks the subtlety or depth of DJ Shadow, but it's still an appreciated effort.
Rating: 8 (MM)

Various Artists
DRUG TEST 2 (Invisible DCD)
This two disc sampler of what Invisible has to offer these days is honestly pretty cool. I didn't originally care for much of their signings; Pigface was the only band of interest for a while, along with Lab Report, of course. This disc finds a much less rocked out Invisible and showcases an array of more experimental and worthwhile acts. The first disc features some previously released material while the second features the same artists in exclusive remixes. You'll hear material from Pigface (their first new song since *Notes*, but it's not as cool as I hoped), Pounder, Scorn, F.M. Einheit, Test Dept., Dead Voices on Air, Matera (a new project featuring M.J. Harris of Scorn with MTT of Meathead), Phylr (Jim Filer Coleman, formerly of Cop Shoot Cop, look for this one!), Evil Mothers, Transmisia, Spasm, Leech Woman, Psychic TV, Sheep on Drugs, more.... It's a good deal and features some nice tracks.
Rating: 8 (MM)

EMPIRION
Narcotic Influence (CDEP)
This five-song single features several mixes of the club hit title cut. What's always charmed me about this song is that it sounds like an updated version of the sound of the late 80's that was so popular in clubs before the advent of techno culture. The Dave Clarke mix and the Secret Knowledge mix are worthwhile, with the latter extending the song to nearly ten minutes with a slow, plodding beat giving way to a heavy 4-4 trance beat, but it is the Meat Beat Manifesto remix that makes this single so great. Jack Dangers takes the original and makes it into a monster dub piece, with a heavy, irregular rhythm and distorted loops of techno noise. The extended original rounds out the disc, a version which is good in and of itself, but not taken to the quality extreme found in the Meat Beat remix. Look into it.
Rating: 8 (MM)

EVILS TOY
XTC Implant (Metropolis CD)
The new disc from Evils Toy is a step up from *Morbid Mind*. The arrangements are a little more elegant and involved, but they still are very much in the same sound of aggressive electro. *XTC*'s downfall is the monotony, as most of the songs share the same approximate tempo and sequenced sounds. For those into what's happening with the more standard European electro-industrial scene, this is decent, but there are certainly more innovative things happening (Haujobb, Leæther Strip).
Rating: 7 (MM)

Various Artists
EXCLUSIVE ALTERNATIVES (Cleopatra CD)
This "best of" disc brings together 15 tracks from the *Funky Alternatives* compilations. This is great electronic dance music from the late 80's and early 90's. It is what you would expect to hear spinning in some of the better clubs of that time, but the exclusive mixes offer more than just cheesy nostalgia. Included are many historically important tracks by Meat Beat Manifesto, Skinny Puppy, Orbital, FLA, Cabaret Voltaire, The Anti Group, New Order, The Shamen, KMFDM, Tackhead, Severed Heads, A Guy Called Gerald, 23 Skidoo, DAF and Chris and Cosey.
Rating: 8 (MV)

FARMERS MANUAL
fsck (Tray CD)
Farmers Manual is perhaps one of the strangest and most original projects to be released in some time. Ultra-synthetic sounds and drum & bass rhythms are altered beyond belief, creating a hybrid of jungle that at times crosses over to noise. To be clear, let me state that while drum & bass influences are there, the album is in no way dancible, and it only borders on listenable the first time you hear it.

Incredibly crazy, Farmers Manual will really appeal to fans of experimental music more than techno fans. *fsck* has to be heard to be believed. Recommended.
Rating: 8.5 (MV)

FEKTION FEKLER
From Here to Heaven (Pendragon CD)
Two brothers from Texas making goth-industrial synth pieces.... No, it's not Mentallo & the Fixer, it's Fektion Fekler. Hot on the heels of M&TF, FF create similar compositions in terms of sound. However, *From Here to Heaven* leaves much to be desired... Most of the songs pick up with a looped melody and repeat for their entire duration. The vocals then should bring some more dimension to the material, but they're either so difficult to understand that they must not or they're just plain annoying to listen to. They're best when they're trying hardest to emulate the M&TF sound, with unintelligible vocals and somewhat layered organic synth sounds. However, most tracks are at the same slow tempo and don't have enough texture or substance to give them a life of their own. I'm sure these two will get better at what they do. It's a decent start, but not a very strong album.
Rating: 6.5 (MM)

FORMA TADRE
Navigator (Metropolis CD)
This European outfit is doing some really special things. However, you have to wade through some average electro material to find it. *Navigator* is a great album in disguise. However, it's weighted down by boring, clichéd synth industrial not sounding unlike Front 242 meets Haujobb (but not in a good way). Some of the material on *Navigator* is excellent, though. The first two tracks make for a great introduction, but then two more tracks follow of unwanted vocalized dark electro. Tune into the 3 part "Navigator" piece as well as "Mesozoic Tree Ferns" and "FX on a Human Subject" for some really cool stuff. Much of the rest of it is not really worth your while, but it still stands above a great deal of what's happening with electro-industrial music.
Rating: 8 (MM)

FRACTURE
Killernet (Pendragon CD)
Okay, I have to get it out of my system. How can a band expect to have its music taken seriously when it calls its album *Killernet*??? Talk about cliches! The mountain of computers with the evil wire snake erupting from it are a nice touch on the cover. What's too bad about this whole ordeal is that when it comes down to it, Fracture is quite good at what it does. *Killernet* is full of very distorted, heavy electro-synth music, usually enhanced by guitar riffs but never ruined by them. Paul Kendall's assistance on production gives that extra push of distortion, making it sound at times like *Broken*-era NIN, although it never comes off as a clone. "Programmed for Hell" and "Downtown" are good examples of Fracture's potential as a synth-core act.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

FUNKER VOGT
Thanks for Nothing (Metropolis CD)
In the Leæther Strip scheme of things we have Funker Vogt, with a sound that may almost be mistaken for older Leæther Strip material. The style is not too different at all, with full synth orchestrations and heavy, plodding beats. The vocals are almost always completely distorted, once again giving it the sound of Leæther Strip or :wumpscut:. Fortunately, Funker Vogt is decent enough to hold its own in this arena, with enough impact to keep it fierce throughout and enough thought to keep it interesting for more than one song (where

it triumphs over :wumpscut:). It's no wonder that Funker Vogt has risen so quickly (two years since they formed), as they're outdoing most of what's out there in this market.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

Various Artists
THE FUTURE SOUND OF JAZZ 2 (Instinct DCD)
Drum and bass compilations tend to be a bit spotty overall, with every fourth song being really outstanding. This compilation, however, undermines that rule of thumb by placing all the really great songs on one disc in a row. Imagine that. Especially good on the first CD are jazz influenced jungle pieces by Fauna Flash, Beanfield and Chicks With Dicks. While the second disc tends to have less personality then the first and can be a bit tedious, there are still some excellent tracks from µ-Ziq's Mike Paradinas and Autechre side project Gescom.
Rating: 8 (MV)

FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON
We Have Explosive (Astralwerks CDEP)
This new EP from FSOL is quite a change from the majority of their previous work. Rather than the sort of drab electronic-ambient pieces of *Lifeforms*, this takes the track "We Have Explosive" from their last full-length, *Dead Cities*, and reworks it in nine different versions. The first five are the best, as they're redone by the band as a five-part piece, with the first being the harsh original. Additional mixes by Oil add more of a groove to the material, giving it a very different sound from the original.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

GENERAL MAGIC
Frantz (Mego CD)

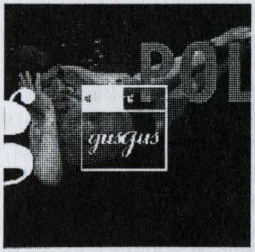
This oddity is in beautiful packaging from the Mego label. The CD included inside isn't too shabby, either, with a schizophrenic blend of rhythm (generally irregular times or so processed it's difficult to make out), sound and frequencies. *Frantz* opens up with "Tyrell," at which point you'll probably check to make sure your CD player isn't malfunctioning (yes, it's supposed to sound like that!). What follows are several engaging pieces which make use of beatbox rhythm loops alongside unpredictable noises and sounds. Most of the music isn't quite as weird as the opener, but overall General Magic has enough quirkiness to safely set it aside from just about anything out there.
Rating: 8.5 (MM)

GRIDLOCK
Sickness (Self-released CS)
This demo release from Gridlock is very cool. It's too bad that they had to tarnish my impression of them with a very egocentric bio. But I can't really knock it, because this tape is worth the praise they give it. This sound is in the vein of more experimental Skinny Puppy material, with ravaged vocals and chaotic percussion which gives way to structure and meter. It's a really good grasp of the sound within which it all works. A new CD release is imminent on Pendragon, so look for it!
Rating: 8 (MM)

GROUND ZERO
Revolutionary Pekinese Opera Ver. 1.50 (Gentle Giant 7")
Avant/noise rock is a style that I had a hard time getting into. The musical chaos seems more like a band of people who do not know how to play anything rather than well crafted noise. However, after some listening, I became more and more intrigued with this style of music. It actually manages to find a kind of coherence in its complete incoherence. It is interesting, although somewhat undynamic.
Rating: 7 (MV)

Various Artists
GURU MEANS SLAYER OF DARKNESS (Manifold CD)
This compilation came out some time ago, but I was so

struck upon the first listen that I thought I would mention it here. This three track disc from the US Manifold label includes exclusive tracks from Illusion of Safety, Hands To and Beequeen. IOS opens the disc with the 20 minute ambient drone masterpiece "Cracks Appear." This is one of the most engaging ambient pieces I've heard in a long time, and certainly one of the best from IOS. The pure, smooth bliss that resonates from the speakers in its duration is reason enough to purchase this disc. Hands To provides some typical noise musique concrete work, with various field recordings juxtaposed with environmental sounds. It's a bit jarring after the IOS opener, but it's not bad. I was eager to hear the Beequeen track, as I'd not yet had a chance to hear their music. I'd heard nothing but praise, and from the sound of it it seemed totally like my thing, but I found "Atem" to be a bit lacking. I like minimalism, but this seemed to be so overly minimal as to become uninteresting. Either way, it's a nice collection of tracks that's available domestically.
Rating: 8.5 (MM)



GUSGUS
PolyDistortion (4·A·D DCD)
This Swedish troupe of nine is a sort of melting pot of sound, integrating trip hop, folk, techno and pop with a bluesy disposition. There is an almost dreamlike quality to this release, a sublime sense of floating throughout. Occasionally the vocals get annoying, mainly due to mixing problems, but for the most part the integration of synths and traditional rock instruments works well. It's a very mellow trip of sound that is a welcome departure from the 4·A·D stereotype. The first 15,000 copies include a second disc of remixes that is decent but really not necessary.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

HANGED MAN'S ORGASM
Frenzy (Self Abuse 7")
HMO delivers cut-up noise similar to the work of Hands To. Two tracks of manipulated and reorganized field recordings exist around layers of subtle noise. This is well crafted, interesting work, although not, as the title suggests, prone to *Frenzy*.
Rating: 7.5 (MV)

Various Artists
HAPPY 2B HARDCORE (Moonshine CD)
This collection of happy hardcore rave tunes is one of the best of its sort. This is a continuous mix collection courtesy of Anabolic Frolic (a.k.a.Chris Samoljenko), and it's not too hard to imagine the sound... lots of hyperactive, irresistible happy tunes. Highlights include tracks from Eruption, JDS, DJ Stompy and Hixxy. A great introduction to the genre.
Rating: 8 (MM)

Various Artists
HARDHOP + TRYPNO V.2 (Moonshine CD)
This compilation offers up several tracks of up-tempo trip hop type material. For those who have latched on to the Chemical Brothers since their recent success (Oasis-tainted single excepted), this would be a nice introduction to some more underground acts. The best cuts are from Tales from the Hardside and especially Mono, with its seemingly endless rhythm and bassline paired with guitar samples. Check it out.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

PAUL HASLINGER
World Without Rules (RGB CD)
Ex-Tangerine Dream member Paul Haslinger has been developing his own style of music, a mixture of world beat and electronic pop, for quite some time now. The sound culminated in the title track of the new CD, which takes everything good about his sound and pushes the envelope. While most of the music is competently composed, I find that much of the sound teeters too close to world beat clichés for my liking. Also, in keeping with the realm of pop music, the album is fairly lightweight and disposable, but it still probably won't catch on too much.
Rating: 5 (MV)

HOOVERPHONIC
A New Stereophonic Sound Spectacular (Epic CD)
Hooverphonic is a group that records in a similar style to Portishead, GusGus and even perhaps Garbage. This album demonstrates their talents for moody, full production and off the wall, wry lyrics. I found myself in love with the first half of this disc upon the very first listen. The second half focuses more on rock-song material in a way that is not too unlike Garbage's more intelligent moments, but it doesn't work half as well as their more delicate, balanced material. Heavily reverberated, delayed guitars appear intermittently over floating synths, plodding trip hop drum loops and ethereal, angelic vocals. Check this out...
Rating: 8 (MM)

HYRO
Sizen Sineido (Tone Casualties CD)
This is a really odd release from a consistently odd label. The music of Hyro takes extremes from experimental music and meshes them with electronics, usually in the vein of off-the-wall dance music. The five lengthy pieces that make up *Sizen Sineido* are quite refreshingly different from a lot of other material presently circulating. The last track is a Hideg Roncs piece included for our listening pleasure (it's also the strangest and noisiest). My only problem is the fourth track which has a complete and total Download rip-off (like they just pressed play in the middle of the tape and did some stuff on top of it), which leads me to believe that there may be other rip off sampling jobs done, and I just don't recognize the source material. Either way, this is a pretty cool album, unpredictable and weird.
Rating: 8 (MM)

Various Artists
IN TO THE MIX (Hypnotic DCD)
Hypnotic is finally starting to put out some quality compilations after several bad ones a few years ago when they first started. This one has jumped onto the "electronica" bandwagon, with some big names such as the Prodigy, Meat Beat Manifesto, Art of Noise, Talla 2XLC and Juno Reactor; however, it is indeed a nice compilation, with the first disc focusing on remixes either of or by reputable artists. Most of it is heavy trance techno, with some trip hop thrown in (LCD and the Chemical Brothers' remix of Prodigy). A free bonus disc is included of Hypnotic artists such as Kinder Atom, Komakino (this track is great!), Bypass Unit, DIN, Giez and more. Between the highlights and the extra disc of material, *In To the Mix* is worth it.
Rating: 8 (MM)

INDIVIDUAL TOTEM
S.E.T.I. (Pendragon CD)
This German duo creates dark electro-EBM music in the vein of older Skinny Puppy (circa *VIVIsectVI*). Their style has been done to death, but they manage to pull it off fairly well. (In some songs, you'd swear it was Ogre himself singing!) *S.E.T.I.* doesn't do too much to hold my attention, but it does have a pretty polished sound. Individual Totem appears to be in the same position in which Haujobb was a few years ago. However, whether they can break out of the confines of a dated sound as successfully as Haujobb have managed remains to be seen.
Rating: 6.5 (MM)

INFORMÄTIK
Direct Memory Access v2.0 (Metropolis CD)
This marks the national release of Informätik's CD by Metropolis. I was most impressed by the Informätik track on the *Mind/Body* compilation a few years ago. It appears that their sound has tightened up a bit, and they're a little more standard. They're still quite good at what they do, and this album demonstrates that pretty well, with many pieces of distorted electro-EBM music. Singer Da5id Din's vocals tend to get in the way sometimes, but overall it's a decent debut. My favorite tracks are the last two, taken from their older sound, when the vocals were more melodic. Also, this release has some nice CD-ROM features, so check it out.
Rating: 7 (MM)

INFORMATION SOCIETY
Are Friends Electric? (Cleopatra, CDEP)
Synthpop is not dead! I must admit, I thought Information Society had faded into obscurity never to be heard from again. But then the folks at Cleopatra sent me the single from the forthcoming album. "Are Friends Electric?" is a catchy cover of a catchy Gary Numan Song. It's hard to go wrong with that. Also included on the single is "Seek 300," an instrumental track that fringes on lightweight industrial with its clanking percussion. Truthfully, nothing is really unexpected about the sound—InSoc pick up right where they left off with *Peace and Love Inc*. Expect good things from the full length later this year.
Rating: 7.5 (MV)

Various Artists
INTO TOPOLOGICAL SPACE (World Domination DCD)
This double-disc collection is a nice sampler of the material signed to and/or distributed by World Domination. Most of the material I'd not yet heard, and I was for the most part impressed with the output of these artists. All of the music on this set is in the electronic semi-trance vein. Not much of it falls into the cliches that often pervade these sorts of compilations, however, as artists such as Perfume Tree (beautiful!), Globo (remixed by Meat Beat Manifesto), Loop Guru and Shriekback (who I didn't even know were still around). The second disc is devoted entirely to Sky Cries Mary, including an additional unmarked track. The SCM material doesn't carry this compilation, however, even though so much of it is devoted to them. All in all, if you're curious about the music on this label, this is a great way to start.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

IUGULA-THOR/SSHE RETINA STIMULANTS
Performance Ranges (Self-Abuse 7")
Iugula-Thor kicks off side one with a piece of nice, harsh, fluctuating noise broken by incredibly bad, extremely irritating vocals, which make the track almost unlistenable. However, it is certainly more irritating than plain noise, so I guess that is a plus in some respects. Still, the Sshe Retina Stimulants side is much more impressive. These guys are just incredibly good at what they do, and they offer a challenging listen as well as an assault on the senses. This is worth getting for noise fans, although I would still highly recommend picking up something more substantial from Sshe Retina Stimulants.
Rating: 7.5 (MV)

SCOT JENERIK
3000 Words (Silent CD)
They say a picture is worth 1000 words, but I would argue that Scot Jenerik's three audio portraits are quite a bit more than that. Divided over 32 tracks and filled to the brim with excellent rhythms and ear-piercing noise, these compositions are very well done. At the point that a piece would cross the line into monotony or become far too aggravating to listen to, the piece changes. *3000 Words* represents one of the most thought out, original experimental works in my recent memory. Jenerik demands attention be paid to his work, not only in terms of the careful, dynamic organization, but also in the packaging of sewn liner art to a quad folded cloth. Frankly, I am very surprised that no one has picked up on this, seeing that it has been released for over two years now. Search it out before all 1000 copies are gone.
Rating: 8.5 (MV)

JLIAT
The Nature of Nature (Jliat CD)
What is there to say about a self-proclaimed "single piece of electronic drone"? Uhm, it's really long. It's really droney. It's really boring. It's really impressive.
Rating: 7 (MM)

KAPOTTE MUZIEK
Threadments (Self-Abuse 7")
Frans de Waard (also of Beequeen) makes up this noise project along with Peter Duimelinks and Roel Meelkop. Kapotte Muziek creates pieces by rearranging and altering the work of others, in this case Thread. The result is a harsh, high-pitched, fairly static assault that continues for both sides of this record, with the latter side being the harsher. Fans of noise might be interested, but there are more innovative things going on in the genre than what can be found here.
Rating: 7 (MV)

TO:34 Mike Vainio - 'Onko' CD
Tone 8 WIR - 'Wirwien' CDEP
Tone 7 New Order - 'Video 5-8-6' CDEP/EP
T33.15 Soliman Gamil - 'A Map of Egypt Before the Sands' CD
TO:32 Rehberg & Bauer - '«Faßt»' CD
TO:31 Mark Van Hoen - 'The Last Flowers from the Darkness' CD
TO:30 Ryoji Ikeda - '+/-' CD
TO:29 Scala - 'Beauty Nowhere' CD/LP
TO:28 Sandoz - 'Every Man Got Dreaming' CD/DLP
TO:27 Chris Watson - 'Stepping into the Dark' CD
TO:26 Philip Jeck - 'Loopholes' CD
TO:25 INDICATE - 'Whelm' CD
TO:24 The Hafler Trio -'How to Reform Mankind' CD
TO:23 Sandoz - 'Intensely Radioactive' CD/DLP
TO:22 The Hafler Trio & The Songs of God - 'Resurrection' LIVE IN SWEDEN CD
TO:21 Sandoz - 'Digital Lifeforms' CD
TO:20 John Duncan - 'Send' CD
TO:19 Strafe F.R. - 'Lufthunger' CD
TO:18 The Hafler Trio - 'Mastery of Money' CD
TO:14 Soliman Gamil - 'Ankh' LP/MC
TO:4 Nocturnal Emissions - 'Drowning in a Sea of Bliss' CD
T33.14 Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson - 'Children of Nature' CD
T33.13 Sweet Exorcist - 'Spirit Guide to Low Tech' CD
Tone 6 Richard H. Kirk - 'Step, Write, Run' 2 x CD
Tone 3 The Hafler Trio - 'FUCK' CD
Tone 2 Etant Donnés - 'Royaume' CD
Tone 1 The Hafler Trio - 'Masturbatorium' CD
SPL:2 Willem de Ridder & The Hafler Trio - 'Snuff' CD
T_ZERO_2 Various Artists - 'Touch. sampler' CD
T_ZERO_1 Various Artists - 'Touch. sampler' CD
TOC:2 The Hafler Trio - 'Kuklos' MC
T33.2 Various Artists - 'Islands In-Between' MC
T3 Various Artists - 'Meridians Two' MC
T1 Various Artists - 'Feature Mist' MC

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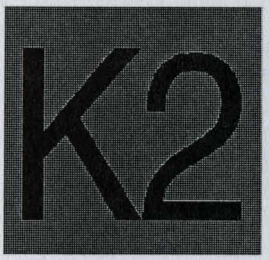
IN BLIND EMBRACE
Songs from the Shadows
(Death Factory CD)
Joe Papa and Paul Lemos of Controlled Bleeding have appeared without much fanfare on Cold Meat Industry's Death Factory imprint. And, as always, they do not disappoint. *SFTS* opens with "The Scalding," an excellent piece consisting of a nice melody buried within noise-laced washes of sound. The brilliance of this track gives way to a series of songs that would fit right in on the Controlled Bleeding albums *Songs From The Ashes*, *Golgotha*, or *Stolen Icons II* (where the original versions of the last tracks, "Tormentor's Song" and "Psalm," can be found. Joe Papa's distinctive, almost operatic voice hovers amongst thick atmospheres of sound. This is the most "gothic" style that the band has developed over the years, so it is only mildly surprising to find Rozz Williams (Christian Death, Premature Ejaculation) lending his vocal talents on "Mother." The seventh track, "Slow Shadows," a beautiful 22+ minute ambient piece offers a break from the lyrical and structured nature of the rest of the album. Fans of Controlled Bleeding (and if you are not one, you should be) should run out and get this.
Rating: 8.5 (MV)



K2
Iron Kulture (Self-Abuse 7")
Noise! K2 puts together heavily affected layers of sound obtained from primarily metal and voice. The result is more organic noise than is usually found, but with a harshness that is truly Japanese by design. Fans of Merzbow or Masonna should definitely check this out.
Rating: 8 (MV)

BRANDON LABELLE
Prima Materia (Self-released CD)
Brandon Labelle is an artist, musician and writer based in Los Angeles, California. Over the years he has performed as a drummer with the bands Farflung, Purse and Id Battery, as well as working on his own material. His solo work involves electronic looping and drones set within the context of the natural ambience of his surroundings (amplified for all to hear). His first release is a good effort which seemingly incorporates all of the components of his live performance. The drawn out tracks are very lulling, but tend to remain relatively dynamic considering the overall sound of experimental music. The pacing is a little bit slow, and the length of the CD strains the attention span of those interested in active listening for the duration of the recording. Still, this is a fairly nice debut.
Rating: 7.5 (MV)

BILL LASWELL
City of Light (Sub Rosa CD)
Oscillations (Sub Rosa CD)
Yet another release from the prolific Bill Laswell. This time on the Sub Rosa label, Laswell presents us with his "India project," *City of Light*. This four-part album features a variety of Eastern sounds and textures pieced together with the spoken word vocals of Lori Carson (ex-Golden Palominos). My only problem with *City of Light* is that it gets boring rather quickly. The spoken word isn't really the focus of the album, but it appears that neither is the music much of the time, as there is relatively little to make it anything beyond tedious. The beautiful poem "There Was Nothing" which proceeds into a lengthy tabla instrumental courtesy of guest Trilok Gurtu comprises the first track, while Coil and Tetsu Inoue supply the soundtracks for the second and third pieces respectively. Yet despite all this

talent, *City of Light* fails to accomplish that of which it is capable. The vocals are so sparse that they almost become distracting. Carson appears to be hot on the heels of her Palominos replacement, Nicole Blackman, as the vocal style is almost identical (I originally thought it *was* Blackman when I first heard it). There is a somewhat soothing quality about the drawn out ambient mantras of *City of Light*, but soothing can quite easily be mistaken for boring.

Boring is definitely not an applicable description of *Oscillations*, however, a considerably different album from Laswell. This is straight ahead drum & bass, hard and heavy, with involved, erratic loops and beats on top of which Laswell plays his bass guitar. The result is incredible, one of the best jungle/drum & bass albums I've heard yet. There's a fierce side to the rhythm of this disc which is very well countered by a melodic elegance underlying Laswell's playing, particularly in the drifting atmospheres which float in and around the music.

City of Light might be suitable for dark nights and a long attention span, whereas *Oscillations* is a totally wonderful drum & bass excursion that never gets boring.

City of Light: 7 (MM)

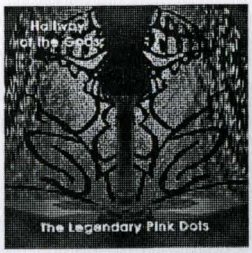
Oscillations: 9 (MM)

LEGENDARY PINK DOTS

4 Days (Terminal Kaleidoscope CD)

This was originally intended to be a limited edition of one cassette upon its conception in 1988 but eventually resulted in a run of 100. Now it's available as a CD in a slightly larger run of 1000. The album was recorded by only Edward Ka-Spel and the Silver Man in an intensely creative perio of four days for a friend, and the short time is obvious in th composition and sound; all songs relate rather closely. Onl two songs have lyrics, and all of the pieces have a certai dreariness that holds them together. It's not the Dots' bes work, but I've always been of the opinion that they can d no wrong, so if you happen upon it, pick it up

Rating: 7.5 (MM



LEGENDARY PINK DOTS

Chemical Playschool 10 (Soleilmoon CD)

Hallway of The Gods (Terminal Kaleidoscope/Soleilmoon CD)

Edward Ka-spel and friends are back with a pair of new recordings. *Hallway of The Gods*, their newest full album, explores and refines the Dots' more recent psychedelic leanings. The album is slow and drug induced, with the full band sound that they have developed. However, it retains that underlying weirdness of sound and brilliance in lyric that characterizes the band's career. The only disappointment is the 11+ minute "The Saucers Are Coming," an uncalled for sci-fi romp complete with theremin. Still, the rest of the album is quite well done and flows nicely from one track to the next.

Fans of LPD's older material should not be disappointed with the release of the latest *Chemical Playschool* (available only at live shows for now, but will be released to the general public eventually). *CS10* presents the band's more scaled down side. The disc releases some of the more odd things done between the years of 1992 and 1997. As always, the work is excellent. Definitely a must for fans.

Hallway of The Gods: 8.3 (MV)

Chemical Playschool 10: 8.5 (MV)

LEGENDARY PINK DOTS

It's Raining in Heaven (Terminal Kaleidoscope CDEP)

The early period of the Pink Dots' career contains songs that are every bit as brilliant and experimental as their middle and later work. However, it is also plagued with dated sounding electronics and poor recording quality. *It's Raining in Heaven* offers a chance to hear these songs with a fuller sound. These seven live recordings from 1988 offer work from *Curse*, *The Tower* and more. It is a good sample of what early Dots are all about, but I would recommend the originals first.

Rating: 8 (MV)

LIQUID SEX DECAY
Liquid Sex Decay (MJ-12 Records CD)
The self-titled debut from Liquid Sex Decay, the project of Apparatus' Syd and D York, is also the pioneer release from the label. The band proclaims itself to be a cross between Skinny Puppy and the Orb. In some ways that is an accurate enough description. Electronic industrial music inserts itself within soundscape layers. The result is interesting, and fairly original, with one exception: "Pins and Needles," which would probably be the single if there was one, tries too hard to make itself friendly to the already accepted mainstream of industrial music. Still, there is promise in this album, and potential for future growth.
Rating: 7.5 (MV)

LØKSA
Green Adaptor (Hypnotic CD)
Hypnotic publicized this with a description of it being heavily influenced by and reminiscent of the work of Philip Glass and Brian Eno. And I suppose to an extent that's correct. It's boring. However, much of *Green Adaptor* lacks the intimacy that makes Glass's work so special, as well as the lush textures that were typical of early Eno. Green Adaptor isn't a bad album, however. Get past the comparisons and it's a decent ambient outing, full of minimal drones and frequencies.
Rating: 7 (MM)

BOB MARINELLI
Dreadnaught (Self-released CS)
Noise merchant Bob Marinelli has returned once again with his third full-length cassette release. The constantly shifting sounds, whether within harsh vocal-laden work of power electronics (a la Masonna) or more subdued, organic pieces, attest to the care put into creating each piece. With the exception of the first song on the cassette, which stands out as being the fastest work and the most aggravating with vocal work that tends to be sub par, the cassette really shows a lot of artistic growth. These are well constructed, controlled and well thought out pieces. This tape is easily ten times better than the majority of recently released noise music. Worth checking out.
Rating: 8.5 (MV)

MARLOW'S LIE
Vaticum (Self-released CS)
The 7 song cassette demo from this industrial/gothic crossover band is actually quite a bit above par. While some of the first few tracks on the tape, such as "Connection" or "Leaving the Voices Behind," tend to fall into the traps of cliched popular industrial, the second side contains some excellent work. "Periodic Paralysis," "Martyr" and "Trial" all demonstrate excellent programming and songwriting ability by delivering up-tempo, hard-hitting electronic music that stands out on its own among the plethora of uninspired Skinny Puppy or Ministry clones.
Rating: 7.5 (MV)

MELT BANANA
EP (Gentle Giant 7")
This Melt Banana record is surprisingly good. The band makes insanity an art form. The chaos is balanced out by a more structured piano part. This is a dynamic, well done recording for anyone interested in the more avant garde side of noise music.
Rating: 8 (MV)

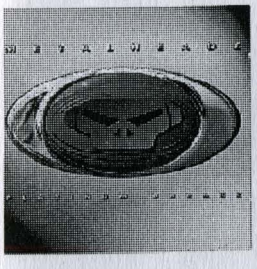
MENTALLO & THE FIXER
Centuries (Metropolis CDEP)
Having considered Texas' Mentallo & the Fixer one of the best new electro-industrial bands around, I was really excited to hear *Centuries* upon its release. However, *Centuries* does little to fulfill my expectations of their new material. The music is sparse and uninspired, lacking the heavy layering and texture of previous work (especially the incredible *Where Angels Fear to Tread*). Instead, we're treated to rather monotonous mid-tempo pseudo-goth-industrial stylings, with four all too similar mixes of "Other World Technology" and two other tracks, one of which features the always annoying vocals of side project Mainesthai's Michael Greene. I certainly hope that the full length, *Burnt Beyond Recognition*, helps M&TF to reclaim their throne in the U.S. electro scene, as *Centuries* surely does not.
Rating: 6 (MM)

MERZBOW
Skumtron (Blast First/Mute CD)
Now here's a concept I would never have imagined: Merzbow remixes. What's truly remarkable about this lot of recordings is that they're not just sourced and manipulated (a la Kapotte Muziek, P16. D4), but rather really remixed. Merzbow contributes two new pieces of blistering noise (similar in style to his Release albums), both of which are not to be missed. The real gems of this set are the most unlikely combinations, in which the artists are free to rework Merzbow to their own devices. Autechre and

MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO
Original Fire (Nothing CDEP)

I was totally thrilled to hear new Meat Beat Manifesto material upon receiving this one. The last double album, *Subliminal Sandwich*, got good reviews across the board, it seemed, but I couldn't get into a lot of it... it just seemed a little too dub-heavy and not interesting musically when compared with either their noisy post-industrial beginnings or 1993's tongue-in-cheek *Satyricon*. *Original Fire* presents us with a bit of old and new... it opens with a remix of "Helter Skelter," revamped for this release. It has always been one of Meat Beat's finest moments, and it's nice to see it reworked, although it still doesn't capture the original without "Dog Star Man." "It's the Music" is the new single, featured in its original mix and a remix by Freaky Chakra. Other tracks include "I Am Electro" and "I Am Organic," two outtakes from the *Satyricon* sessions, an unreleased part of the classic 1988 "I Got the Fear," and three mixes of the 1989 single, "Radio Babylon," which until now has been unavailable but remains one of Meat Beat's most influential pieces yet; the original is still the best but mixes from the Orb and Luke Vibert add a new drum & bass dimension.
Rating: 8 (MM)

Panasonic use the noise to their advantage by using it in small fragments as the source for rhythm loops. For those who thought Merzbow would never have a beat, check out Autechre's interpretation of "Ecobondage." For those who shudder at the thought of Merzbow with accessibility, there's plenty of harshness to go around. In addition to the two new Merzbow tracks, there are extreme ambient-noise crossover pieces (trust me, you'll understand when you hear it) courtesy of Rehberg/Bauer, Jim O'Rourke, Russell Haswell and Bernard Günter. Considering the barrage of new Merzbow releases this year alone, it's nice that there's one that stands above the rest. Sure, *Venereology* remains his most essential, but this is one of the most interesting of late. Recommended.
Rating: 8.5 (MM)



Various Artists

METALHEADZ PRESENTS PLATINUM BREAKZ (ffrr DCD)
This two disc compilation is an affordable way to check out Goldie's Metalheadz label. This is where a lot of drum & bass started, and the experience usually shows. Material is included by Rufige Kru (Goldie), Peshay, Doc Scott, Dilinja, Lemon D., Alex Reece, J Majik, Photek, Hidden Agenda, Source Direct, Digital, Asylum and Wax Doctor, and most of it is heavy breakbeat jungle. Occasionally divas filter into the sound, not usually yielding good results unfortunately, but overall it's a fairly consistent set of tracks, the highlights coming from Rufige Kru, Doc Scott, Peshay, J Magik and Dilinja. It lacks the personality or variety of *Artcore 3* but is also more in your face.
Rating: 8 (MM)

Various Artists
MIXMAG LIVE! VOL. 21: LTJ BUKEM (DMC/ Mixmag CD)
This installment of the Mixmag Live! compilation series has been out for some time, but I just recently picked it up. I chose to mention it here because it's a great disc full of some of the most subtle, sublime drum & bass around, courtesy of DJ sensation LTJ Bukem. True to the sound of his label, Good Looking Records (some of whose materials are featured herein), as well as to his own music, Bukem has spun together over an hour of smooth, atmospheric drum & bass pieces. Because of the difficulty in

Mortal Draught

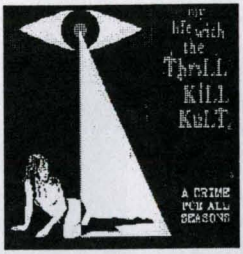
At the bottom of
this translucent red black pool
there is dirt and clay,
the dust
where we, like wine foam
a drunken, giddy brief
lace of life weave out,
reading our own passions in
the webs the threads
that quiver in our veins—
clutching the pleasures
of our bloodfilled bottles…
to forget or forestall
their gradual diminution
we deny
or postpone with toasts
or smash upon the ground
in furies—
anything
to hold back the last drop
and the moment
when nothing is left
but our voices,
memories;
the fumes
which we pour upon the earth.

—Valerie Grimm

distinguishing separate tracks, Mixmag opted to release this disc as one 70-minute long track. The intent is there, to require a continuous listen of the music. However, this is quite trying on listeners, not because they don't want to sit through the music, but mainly because not a lot of people have that much time to listen to music uninterrupted. Perhaps they could have arbitrarily created separate tracks as with the previous release of Richie Hawtin's set. In any case, it's a fine collection of tunes, mixed together with irregular and often changing breakbeats, the way jungle should be heard.
Rating: 8.5 (MM)

MLEHST
Case History #4 (Self Abuse 7")
I was surprised to hear this 7" coming from a label that deals primarily in noise releases. Mlehst is anything but noisy. The reserved, ambient atmospheres drone around looped sound recordings, offering a quiet, contemplative backdrop of sound. This is a very nice, moody recording, and well worth checking out.
Rating: 8.3 (MV)

µ-ZIQ
Lunatic Harness (Astralwerks CD)
Mike Paradinas takes a huge stride forward with the newest µ-Ziq disc. He manages to push the randomness of jungle to new extremes. In many of the songs, I doubt that there is a regular rhythm at all, a technique which, incidentally, can become distracting. Even so, as with other releases, *Lunatic Harness* offer quite a bit more than extreme drum patterning. The usual cheap sounds are organized flawlessly into full melodies that float around several styles of music, from hard edged rhythmic pieces like "Approaching Menace" to the more laid back stylings of "Wannabe." Paradinas is one of the more innovative artists currently recording, and the new album may be one of the most important of the year. Recommended.
Rating: 8.5 (MV)



MY LIFE WITH THE THRILL KILL KULT
A Crime for All Seasons (Red-Ant CD)
MLWTTKK has returned to the music scene again with a fantastic new album! I never had a chance to hear their last album, *Hit & Run Holiday*, but from what I've heard this is quite an improvement. Scarce are the disco influences of the more dance-oriented *Sexplosion!* and *13 Above the Night*, and of course you shouldn't expect to hear anything even vaguely "industrial" like their Wax Trax! material. This album feels a lot more like a band did it, with more guitar and what sound like live drums in the mix. It's still just as retro-crazy as their other newer material, with the TKK attitude problem in full effect. It's not as heavily produced as *13 Above the Night* and more stripped down, but it's a refreshing change from this outfit.
Rating: 8 (MM)

Various Artists
NARRATIVES: MUSIC FOR FICTION (Manifold CD)
This three artist, three song disc focuses on music inspired by literature. Paul Schütze begins the recording with the shortest track, an odd piece filled with fast-paced percussive blips in a shallow atmosphere of noise. Voice of Eye's contribution to the disc is very true to form. With buried instruments and warm layers of sound, the work is, as always, hauntingly beautiful. A piece by Robert Rich closes the CD with a strong, constantly changing ambient piece that always manages to remain interesting. Overall, *Narratives* is quite beautiful and worth getting your hands on.
Rating: 8 (MV)

NINE INCH NAILS
"The Perfect Drug" Versions (Nothing CDEP)
This five track EP includes several heavily reworked versions of the last NIN single (its original version appeared on the *Lost Highway* soundtrack). The emphasis is on the drum & bass elements of the original, appearing most obviously in the Meat Beat Manifesto mix. Plug and NIN offer two rather heavy versions of it while avoiding the overly accessible chorus tune of the original, while Spacetime Continuum has taken a rather lightweight dubby approach and the Orb have added their trademarked weird

spaciness to their mix. Overall, none of the mixes shines quite like the original, whose accessibility was its biggest pro and con at the same time. However, if this emphasis on rhythm and Trent's apparent fascination with the drum & bass scene is any indication of what's to come, the next NIN full length should be quite interesting!
Rating: 7 (MM)

NOCTURNAL EMISSIONS
Friction and Dirt (Staalplaat CD)
Nocturnal Emissions is always original, their newest undertaking being no exception. *Friction and Dirt* manages to be droney, melodic, interesting, moody and, most of all, odd, all at the same time. It is really surprisingly that NE can stay as coherent and focused as they do and be consistently original. This is a release to search out.
Rating: 8.5 (MV)

NURSE WITH WOUND/ARANOS
Acts of Senseless Beauty (United Dairies CD)
This new disc from Steven Stapleton and company presents a different dimension to the music of Nurse With Wound. Totally missing are the strange cut up juxtapositions of found sounds and sourced material from early NWW recordings. Also gone are the rhythmic tangents of recordings such as *Who Can I Turn To Stereo?*. This is no doubt partly due to the assistance of Aranos (Petr Vastl), with a decided emphasis on the use of violin in the recordings. Sometimes it's played in a pseudo-ambient, dreary mode ("Either Open or Unsound," "Some Magic Powers") whereas at other times it's used for sound textures ("The Entertainer"), annoying at times in true NWW fashion. Overall I was thoroughly excited by this release from a project which never seems to grow tired.
Rating: 8 (MM)

NURSE WITH WOUND
Spiral Insana (United Dairies CD)
Steven Stapleton's Nurse With Wound project has been moving fairly consistently in a more musical direction with the release of 1994's *Rock n' Roll Station* and last year's *Who Can I Turn To Stereo?*. However, this new CD is not new, but a reissue of a 1986 cassette-only release. The twenty "songs" (ahem) are broken up over 3 tracks with a crunching sound separating each. Stapleton is the master of altering between incredible, serious pieces of experimental music and inane, amusing works, one of which even stoops to using duck calls (and, hey, a version of "This Piano Can't Think" is even on here with vomiting noises spliced into the middle). Nurse With Wound is an important project within the experimental music scene and well worth checking out.
Rating: 8 (MV)

NOISE UNIT
Drill (Metropolis CD)
Drill marks the fifth official release from Bill Leeb and Rhys Fulber as Noise Unit. Better known for their work as Front Line Assembly, the two output their more techno leanings as Noise Unit. *Drill* finds the two integrating guitar more, which is not surprising in light of newer FLA, only here it appears much more tastefully, with heavy processing and manipulating altering the guitar sound. Entirely instrumental, *Drill* is like a more aggressive version of its predecessor *Decoder* (which appeared to only be FLA's scrapped album that was replaced by *Millennium*?). Input from original Noise Unit cohort Marc Verhaegen (Klinik) as well as newcomers Haujobb add to the quality of this release making it sound more fresh, not just a retread of the pair's recent work. "Other World" is the closest cut on this release to an anthem, whereas the majority of it is heavyhanded electro-trance. Well done and highly recommended!
Rating: 8.5 (MM)

ORDO EQUILIBRIO
The Triumph of Light...and Thy Thirteen Shadows of Love (Cold Meat Industry CD)
The second full length from Ordo Equilibrio unfortunately lives up to neither the high expectations set by its debut appearance on the *Karmanik Collection* compilation nor the quality of the first album, *Reaping the Fallen...the First Harvest*. There's nothing out of the ordinary here as far as their sound goes. However, it is a hopeless retread of what wasn't a very interesting first album. But *Reaping the Fallen...* had something going for it: it was new. The sound is a bit tired here... how many songs can these guys make that consist of rhy-thmic chanting vo-cals and thudding, reverberated percussion? A lot. This blends with some Death in June styled gloomy folk guitar stuff, and everything gets buried under a blanket of reverberation. It's too bad that they couldn't have done more with this sound.. it has such potential.
Rating: 6.5 (MM)

Various Artists
PARADIGM SHIFT (Subconscious CD)
With the lineup featured on this compilation, I expected it to be incredible. Unfortunately, names are all this disc really has to offer, as the material featured here leaves much to be desired. It's a sampler of cEvin Key's Subconscious label, and thus the tracks here are just sort of random, all simply having been recorded as work for the label. The last work of D.R. Goettel (aDuck) is not all it's cracked up to be, and an almost scammed Skinny Puppy track (which only features one original member!) is hardly worth bothering with. Other artists include Philth (a decent cut), Download, Plateau (cEvin Key recording rather average, albeit quirky, trance), Dead Voices on Air (a standout), Kone, Doubting Thomas (outtakes from *The Infidel*) and The Tear Garden (the best material on the disc by far).
Rating: 5 (MM)

ORBITAL
In Sides (ffrr DCD)
Whether or not this whole "electronica" flare in the press is just another passing trend in American culture in lieu of how bad rock music has become or it is seriously affecting mainstream music perceptions, Orbital will always remain a step above the rest, and their newest is a good example of why and how. *In Sides* is a wonderfully subtle album of pure electronics. Its nuances and intricacies are what make it so great, as it's difficult to take it all in upon the first listen. What seem like repetitive and minimalist pieces are actually quite involved and developed, as "The Box" and "Dwr Budr" both demonstrate. A second disc includes the single and B-side of "The Saint," as well as live versions of "Satan" and "Halcyon" (the latter of which includes the segment which MTV's Amp refers to as "Live Experience").
Rating: 9 (MM)

PIG
Sinsation (Nothing CD)
Following his reunion with KMFDM, Raymond Watts has brought back to the spotlight his solo project Pig. Once again, Watts demonstrates his ability to create innovative music which immediately surpasses any work by KMFDM and completely justifies his departure from the group in the mid 80's. Released domestically on Trent Reznor's Nothing label, *Sinsation* does show some influence from Watts' reunion with KMFDM on the *Nihil* album (Wax Trax!), with heavy guitar riffs overriding the usual symphonic orchestrations in spots, but the result isn't unnatural at all. Rather, *Sinsation* shows a rejuvenated, heavy-as-ever Pig taking the industry by storm. Cleopatra is working on reissuing some of Pig's earlier works, which are not to be missed either!
Rating: 8 (MM)

PIGFACE
A New High In Low (Invisible CD)
Martin Atkins returns once more with his "Hey, wanna be in my band?" band, Pigface. As usual, the sound has changed quite a bit from 1994's *Notes From Thee Underground* and its remix album *Feels Like Heaven, Sounds Like Shit*. The first disc floats around in sound, linking more "experimental" works involving tape loops and low drones with regular song-oriented pieces complete with Atkins' characteristic drumming. Almost all of the current Invisible lineup appear on the CD at one point or another. Atkins acts as the anchor, allowing different styles and tastes to blend really well, and at the same time letting the pieces flow nicely into one another until the quiet vocals of the last track. The tone of the second disc is more dub oriented with three ultra long tracks, two of which include bass lines by Mick Harris, vocals by the always annoying, extremely overrated Genesis P'Orridge and additional sounds courtesy of Atkins and Resident Phase Shifter. *A New High In Low* is a nicely developed addition to the Pigface discography and proves once more that the band cannot be pigeonholed into a specific sound.
Rating: 8 (MV)

Various Artists
PLATINUM ON BLACK VOL. 3 (ffrr CD)
This collection of popular and underground dance tracks is almost flawless! ...Almost. Great cuts are present from C.J. Bolland (the irresistible "Sugar is Sweeter," in two mixes), Goldie, JX, Crescendo, DJ Misjah & Tim, Salt Tank and even New Order. The only duds are from Gabrielle, Incognito and Tropicana, even though they've had dancefloor success. Despite its bad spots, *Platinum on Black Vol. 3* is great and a worthwhile investment.
Rating: 8 (MM)

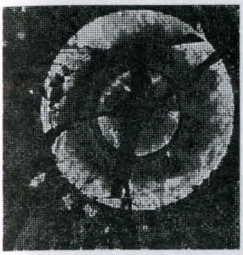
ROBERT RICH/ ALIO DIE
Fissures (Fathom CD)

Robert Rich is not only one of the founding fathers of ambient music, he is also one of the best around. The latter claim can also be applied to newcomer Stefano Musso (Alio Die), whose domestic debut *under an holy ritual* on Projekt Records was extremely well received. As a result, *Fissures* comes off as one of the most non-cliched, entrancing ambient releases in a long time. Musically, it is not as dark as many recent releases, but is also not just overlapping layers of sound. Synthesized drones and samples form an environment for more traditional instruments to live and breathe within. This is ambient *music*, not soundscaping. Recommended.
Rating: 8.5 (MV)

REHBERG & BAUER
«Faßt» (Touch CD)
This project consists of looped noises and drones which are fairly well layered. Unfortunately there is not too much going on here, and it quickly becomes boring. Fans of subtly changing, minimal experimental music might want to look into this.
Rating: 6 (MV)

STEVE ROACH/STEPHEN KENT/KENNETH NEWBY
Halcyon Days (Fathom CD)
Ethno-ambient artist Steve Roach's newest undertaking is this collaboration with Trance Mission's Kent and Newby. The work is beat oriented music with an ethnic flair. In many ways, the CD is quite listenable, but I find it to be walking a fine line. I actually enjoy some ethno-ambient

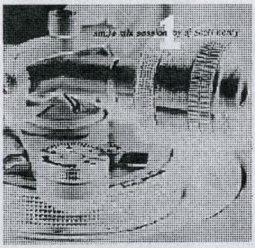
and "world beat" oriented music, but it is a style that conjures up many tired clichés. While *Halcyon Days* does not quite fall into the pitfalls of the style, it does not push as much as I had hoped. If you like Steve Roach's music, you know what you are getting into.
Rating: 6 (MV)



STEVE ROACH/VIDNA OBMANA
Cavern of Sirens (Projekt CD)
These days Steve Roach is on a collaborative kick, this time with Vidna Obmana. Of all the people to choose from, I think VO was a spectacular choice. Over the years, they have proven themselves to be excellent at crafting sound, and are able to nicely counterbalance the ethnic leanings of Roach. *Cavern of Sirens* is well written and representative of both Vidna Obmana and Roach, but also takes an extra step that separates it from both.
Rating: 7.5 (MV)

Various Artists
scatter. (Ash International CD)
This five song compilation is the second in a triptych (*chiky(u)u* was the first, *decay* will be the third). It's full of the experimentalism Ash is known for with new tracks from artists such as Jim O'Rourke, John Hudak, Kevin Drumm, Earth and Daniel Menche. The Drumm track is his first released material, and while its best place here is as the opener, it's still the weakest track, with alternating tones of grinding feedback. Neither harsh enough to be impressive or dynamic enough to be interesting. Aside from the Drumm track and the guitar dirge of Earth, the rest of this disc is very avant garde ambient. These three artists really make you turn it up to hear all the interesting nuances of what's happening. The best track is the 15+ minute long "Unholy Cricket Fuck" by Daniel Menche, which manages to cover a variety of grounds in terms of atmosphere and sound without retreading itself haplessly. For those into avant garde experimental music, this is a decent compilation.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

SHEEP ON DRUGS
One For the Money (Invisible CD)
After hearing the *Double Trouble* collection (which was comprised of two previously released EP's), I was a bit leery of reviewing this new full length from everyone's favorite drug-induced idols, Sheep on Drugs. The light weight techno of "Come Fly With Me" didn't go over with me after hearing their energetic debut, *Greatest Hits*, several years ago. However, *One for the Money* redeems the band, and then some. This album takes the techno waters they were dipping their toes in on *Double Trouble* and crosses it with drum & bass and house effortlessly. The result is surprisingly honest and remarkable! Sheep on Drugs have finally stood their ground with this fun, drug-crazed album. Recommended!
Rating: 8.5 (MM)



Various Artists
sm:)e MIX SESSION 1 (sm:)e CD)
This is a great continuous mix session by DJ Scott Henry that touches many different bases of dance music. It has its moments of house, trance and pop and it all works together seamlessly. Some cuts are recognizable hits, such as 4 Hero's "Mr. Kirk's Nightmare," Love Inc.'s "R.E.S.P.E.C.T.," Baby D's "Let Me Be Your Fantasy," 2 Bad Mice's "Bombscare" and the Mighty Dub Kats' "Magic Carpet Ride" (in a very tripped out format). This disc is sure to please anyone interested in what's happening with electronic dance music now. As I understand it, there's a new mix session available, but I've not seen it yet. An excellent collection.
Rating: 9 (MM)

STUART SAUNDERS SMITH
Wind in the Channel (O.O. Discs CD)
The liner notes claim that Stewart Saunders Smith's music does not cohere. I tend to disagree. When I think of work that tends to come unraveled, I think of some of Cage's chance composition pieces which generally plink and plunk

minimally without really going anywhere. To be sure, Smith's compositions are full of the chaos that Cage laid the foundations for, and the work is probably just as difficult to play, but I must say, the compositions are a much more interesting listen. While some of the work is not coherent, it maintains enough substance to still have some form there. Frankly, I am glad Smith did not push it any farther. As it is, the compositions are fairly devoid of emotion due to the crazed changes within each piece, but at least they hold a listener's attention. The vocal work adds a much needed repose from the chaos, but unfortunately the music still feels like there is something missing.
Rating: 6 (MV)

SOCIAL INTERIORS
Traces of Mercury (Extreme CD)
This field recording group is really quite good. Consisting of Rik Rue, Shane Fahey and Julian Knowles, Social Interiors makes use of a variety of field recordings and integrates them with keyboard sounds and heavy processing effects to create a thick mass of sound that works well. Throughout these five pieces there are drones, found sounds and occasionally voice ("Shroud of Doubt") and rhythm ("Recent Alchemy"). The last piece, the eighteen-minute long "Navigation, The First Stage... (Dislocation)" is the most developed of all, with crescendoes of sound and unusual sounds running throughout. A very interesting piece of work indeed.
Rating: 8 (MM)

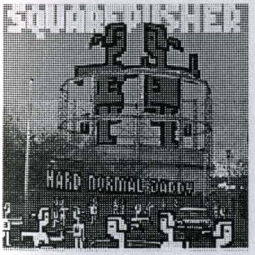
SOLARUS
Empty Nature (Release CD)
Upon putting in *Empty Nature* for the first time, I was struck by the first track. The fairly standard dub was nevertheless well done, enhanced by guitar work from the album's producer, James Plotkin. Unfortunately, the disc continues with the same formulaic approach, the same endlessly repeating bass line and one sample over and over and over again, until you want to scratch up the CD and use it as a frisbee. To be fair, I suppose I am not advised to listen to Solarus in an unaltered state. But still, if you are looking for good listening music, you will not find it here.
Rating: 4 (MV)

SOMA
Stygian Vistas (Extreme CDEP)
Soma is a collaboration between David Thrussell (Snog, Black Lung) and Pieter Bourke (formerly of Eden and currently working with Lisa Gerrard of Dead Can Dance). This EP release is the follow-up to the second Soma full-length release, *The Inner Cinema*. The title track is a reprise from its original appearance on the aforementioned album, which is welcome because it was one of the album's highlights. Here it is abridged ("Controlled Radio") and paired with a remix of "God Sends the Meat & the Devil Cooks" from their debut, *Hollow Earth*. The three new tracks are quirkier than much of *The Inner Cinema*, shaking much of the cinematic atmosphere of that album and giving more attention to erratic rhythms and sounds. "Amphibious Premonitions Bureau" finds the pair experimenting with what could almost be considered drum & bass rhythms (but yielding entirely different results), while the other material has basslines reminiscent of much of the dub material being released lately. A remix of the title track appears courtesy of Nonplace Urban Field, while François Tétaz (of Shinjuku Filth/Thief) has remixed "Risen From Agartha" and labelmates Fetisch Park have remixed "Alchemical Nuptial" (both originally from *The Inner Cinema*). Overall, it's a great listen, supporting David Thrussell's running tally of excellent releases.

SNOG
Remote Control (Metropolis CD)
When I heard's Snog's *The Future* EP, I knew they were onto something. The full length follow-up features some new work as well as old tracks reworked to suit their new, more techno-oriented sound. Originally, it was Snog's politics that made their music worthwhile ("Winners don't do drugs... they sell them"); now they've brought the two on par with one another, making *Remote Control* a remarkable effort. The majority of the material is heavy electronic compositions embellished by singer David Thrussell's signature groan; however, some veer toward older electro as well as more traditional, almost band-oriented mellow dub material. Highlights include "We Decorate Your Life," "Shop," "Cliché," and remixes of "Born to Be Mild." One of the best electronic albums to come out recently.
Rating: 9 (MM)

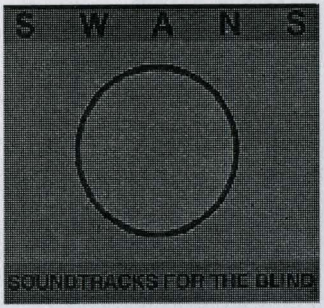
Rating: 8 (MM)

SPAHN RANCH
Architecture (Cleopatra CD)
There's something about the new Spahn Ranch LP that makes it really hard for me to get into it. I can't quite put my finger on it. Maybe it's that the sound is now a little worn after the excellent predecessor, *The Coiled One*. Athan Maroulis's vocals are still strong, but at the same time, they start to make every song sound very similar. The aggression of earlier work is almost entirely gone here, and I think that's the reason the songs just seem to go, one after the other, without much to make any of them stand out. In terms of style, *Architecture* has fallen into a sort of sophomore slump, as it's the only full length to continue the sound of its predecessor (the debut, *Collateral Damage*, was quite different!!).
Rating: 6.5 (MM)



SQUAREPUSHER
Hard Normal Daddy (Warp CD)
It's safe to say that Tom Jenkinson creates some of the quirkiest, most unpredictable music of today. *Hard Normal Daddy* was my first exposure to the music of Squarepusher, and its greatness cannot be easily described. The music is entirely electronic, but it has more in common with jazz than the jungle sounds that appear throughout. The music is thoroughly composed and entirely instrumental, with relatively few loops or discernible refrains. Some songs are more "regular," while others, such as "Chin Hippy" are totally insane electronic nightmares. It's in these crazier pieces that the percussion that was barely under control is permitted to run rampant, with crashing waves of beats and erratic cut-ups. Squarepusher is taking genres and music in general to the hilt, and *Hard Normal Daddy* is essential. The future of music as we know it!
Rating: 9 (MM)

SUBARACHNOID SPACE
Almost Invisible (Release CD)
Taking a break from his performances as Trance, Mason Jones has gathered a new ensemble and signed it to Release. This foursome creates improvised, lengthy pieces of guitar psychedelia. With a lineup consisting of two guitarists, a bassist and a percussionist, the sound is likewise rock-oriented. But this is of course simply a label when handed over to Jones, and the music that results from these live performances is heavily reverberated, melodic, dissonant



SWANS
Soundtracks for the Blind (Young God DCD)
And so it's arrived, the final Swans release. (I guess you could say this is their swan song, . Uhm, right.) In any case, this double disc masterpiece brings to a close the unusual metamorphosis that has marked the last several years of the Swans' career. At times the material on *Soundtracks* feels less like an album and more like a collection of unreleased tracks. Michael Gira wrote the majority of the material, and it shows as touches of his excellent 1995 album *Drainland* shine through. The songs which comprise these two lengthy discs are all incredibly dark and dirge-like, but are not so in the apocalyptic dirge rock of *Real Love*. Rather, they're bleak soundscapes, filled with strange samples and achieved composition. It's difficult to sit through one disc alone, especially both in a row, mainly because the music doesn't flow too well, and also because it's so dark that it grows disturbing with time. However, none of these minor flaws detracts from how great this package is. Excellent.
Rating: 9 (MM)

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and driving. These six pieces interact as one long recording rather than distinct tracks, and it's a head trip not to be missed!
Rating: 8 (MM)

SKULI SVERRISSON
Seremonie (Extreme CD)
This disc of sound experiments is remarkable if only because the entire recording was made through the use of electric bass guitars. (The technique almost reminds me of Alan Lamb's *Archival Recordings*, although not yielding the same aesthetic at all!) Not that you could tell, because Sverrisson has altered so heavily his original source recordings that what were at one time actual bass sounds now come across as disembodied atmospheres. Occasionally the sound experiments border on the strange and irritating, such as "Crash Frozen," but for the most part this is a pretty nice collection of work. "ëAn" is interesting because it's one of the only times you can make out the bass itself as an instrument. Seeing as to how that's the last song, you can rest assured that *Seremonie* takes you all over the place before returning to the source.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

SWANS
Children of God · World of Skin (Young God DCD)
Swans are officially winding down, and with that comes the reissue of two of their releases, the *Children of God* album from 1987 and the World of Skin side project's self-titled album from 1988. These two releases in their remastered form are timeless classics demonstrating the consistent quality of the output of Swans. What's nice about these two in comparison to their excellent *Soundtracks for the Blind* album is that the music is more collaborative between the two core members, M. Gira and Jarboe. Jarboe's voice is permitted to go free with songs such as "Cry Me a River," "Still a Child," "Children of God" and more. The music features a variety of sounds, from clattery rock to drone-folk, all of it either enhanced by Jarboe's beautifully strange voice or Gira's signature hollow drone voice. Essential, possibly my favorite album of the issue!
Rating: 9.5 (MM)

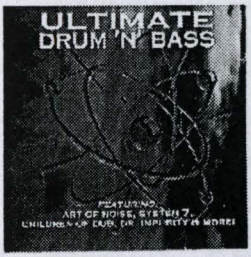
SWITCHBLADE SYMPHONY
Scrapbook (Self-released CD)
This female fronted dark industrial-goth project has a lot to offer. The programming and songwriting are first rate, which only enhances the lead singer's beautiful voice. The tracks on this recent 7 song EP (+ 1 interview segment) blend industrial music together with a very emotional, gothic feeling. *Scrapbook* is worth looking into.
Rating: 7.5 (MV)

TACTILE
Recurrence and Intervention (Sentrax CD)
I really disliked Tactile's last CD, *Inscape*. Comprised primarily of dull loops and weak compositions, it was not interesting enough to listen to, and not ambient enough to put on in the background. The new CD is a decided improvement on the first. Some big name experimental artists were brought in to remix Tactile material. The result is some truly exquisite, although very different, compositions from J.K. Broadrick's Solaris project (Godflesh, Final) and James Plotkin. Unfortunately, some of the other musicians' attempts fell short of where they probably could have, especially from the Coil and :Zoviet*France: tracks on here, which tend to be quite boring. Scorn, ø, Scalpel, Eyeless in Gaza and Blood from the Soul also appear on the album with fairly decent ambient work.
Rating: 7 (MV)

TERMINAL SECT
Bread and Wine for the Dirt (Metropolis CD)
Terminal Sect's first full length release, *thehumansconditiomed*, was one of the best electro albums to appear this decade. It demonstrated an able grasp of melody, sound, lyrics and concepts which all worked together seamlessly. They followed it up with the rather disappointing *Gun Worship* EP, which focused on their more guitar-driven style. Metropolis has graciously made available their new full-length, *Bread and Wine for the Dirt*. Unfortunately, this does not approach the standards set by the debut, although it is a good album. The styles on this release seem to lack the ingenuity and freshness that carried their debut, with all songs done in the same distorted vocal style and guitars appearing more often than not. It does have its moments, however, such as "Plastic Meat" (clocking in at over 13 minutes in length) and "Dissident's Eye." I would

recommend their debut (if you can find it) first, but this is also a decent album from Terminal Sect.
Rating: 7.5 (MM)

TUU
Mesh (Fathom CD)
TUU (pronounced "too") is an interesting project. Its three members blend traditional and nontraditional acoustic instruments with obviously synthesized sounds to create a very original whole. The music itself tends to be a little light, although not devoid of emotion by any means. These are sounds for the time near sunset, for the time before rest, not the onset of the dark night. Very restful and contemplative.
Rating: 8 (MV)



Various Artists
ULTIMATE DRUM N' BASS
(Hypnotic CD)
This is an odd collection of songs considering the title is refers to it as the ULTIMATE in drum & bass. This is not to say that it's bad, but it is a bit off the path as far as the ultimate in this genre. Songs appear from many Cleopatra artists such as System 7 (a.k.a. 777, Steve Hillage of Gong), Spahn Ranch (out of character, of course), Aqualite, Kinder Atom and more. It's actually not too bad; at first I didn't like it at all. This definitely grows on you with time. A bit much to sit through all at once, but a decent collection of songs.
Rating: 7 (MM)

Various Artists
UNDERCURRENT (Doppler Effect CD)
This industrial music compilation of Portland bands is the first release of DFX Records and *Sonic Boom Magazine*. While much of the music falls into standard patterns of electro and EBM music, there is also some excellent work here. Standout tracks are Spinefolder's exquisite "The Soul Barrier," one of the best written industrial tracks I have heard in a while, Mesmer's "Fire Reveals Itself," a more tribal oriented piece, Thine Eyes' "Devil Mountain," Violet Arcana's "Solace" and the more experimental "Lorrie Pours Out" by Triple Point. All in all, this is a fairly consistently good compilation for fans of modern industrial music.
Rating: 7 (MV)

TRIAL OF THE BOW
Rite of Passage
(Release CD)

Trial of the Bow's first full length picks up where their *Ornamentation* EP left off, and takes off. The Australian duo, Renalto Gallina and Matthew Skarajew, create this absolutely incredible music entirely with traditional instruments (i.e., anything that can be bowed, plucked, blown, struck, etc.). The major difference between the EP and *Rite of Passage* is in style. While *Ornamentation* held a similar sound throughout its four tracks and tended to grow somewhat repetitive, attention was obviously paid on the new album to a more interesting pacing and changes of mood. Also the music holds an incredible amount of depth by incorporating Middle Eastern, European and African influences into the mix. The forms and musical ideas flow together seemingly effortlessly, building a worldly, ancient feeling sound that immediately touches those fortunate enough to hear it. Highly recommended!
Rating: 9.5 (MV)

UNDERWORLD
Pearl's Girl (Wax Trax! CD)
This nine-track "EP" includes seven new tracks plus the original and edited version of the title cut, taken from Underworld's outstanding second album from 1996, *Second Toughest in the Infants*. It's worth it alone for "Tin There," one of the group's heaviest full-on techno pieces, but the rest of the tracks carry the subtle mood and knack for smoothness that Underworld is known for. Some of the cuts are better than others ("Cherry Pie" is a strong point), and while *Pearl's Girl* doesn't compare to *Second Toughest*, it's another fine staple in a virtually flawless discography.
Rating: 8 (MM)

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:WUMPSCUT:
Bunker Gate 7 (Metropolis CD)
I don't really understand all the buzz about :wumpscut:. *Bunker Gate 7* is the new domestic reissue by Metropolis Records (originally titled *Bunkertor 7*). It is an album of moments. There is brilliance in the way sample runs into song on "Thorns," and a hint of interesting composition on "Capital Punishment." But, like every other track, they get repetitive and continue for far longer than they should. The other problem I have with :wumpscut: is that it's just trying too often to make the hard hitting electro-industrial of Leæther Strip during the *Solitary Confinement/Underneath the Laughter* period of his career. The worst part of it is that the talent seems to be there. If this guy would stop being so derivative, :wumpscut: could be great. As it stands now, they are fine to dance to, but I wouldn't put in *Bunker Gate 7* for listening purposes.
Rating: 5.5 (MV)

:WUMPSCUT:
Music for a Slaughtering Tribe (Metropolis CD)
This is the domestic reissue of :wumpscut:'s breakthrough album. It seems like everyone in the electro-industrial scene is obsessed with the music of Rudy Ratzinger. However, little of his output is deserving of the praise it receives. Certainly something is to be said of the sheer fury of tracks such as the underground hit "Soylent Green," but as it opens this disc, all that follows is a mere retread. Most songs feature the same plodding drum beat, vocals that sound lifted from an old Leæther Strip album, and relatively little change in dynamics or musicality. Perhaps if Mr. :wumpscut: focused more on songwriting and little less on being angry, his music would be more enjoyable and less obnoxious.
Rating: 6.5 (MM)

Various Artists
UNDERWOOD TWO
(Sub Rosa CD)
This is an outstanding compilation from the Belgian label Sub Rosa, featuring a wide variety of artists working in the experimental-electronic vein. There are some well-known artists here (Bill Laswell/Ninj, Mick Harris/ Eraldo Bernocchi, Scanner, Oval v/s Main, David Shea) and some not-so-well-known (Bisk, Vedic, Nûs, Rawfrücht, UI, Tone Rec), but all them are good, running the gamut from hard drum & bass (Harris/ Bernocchi) to experimental drone (Vedic, Oval v/s Main). Included with the CD is a multimedia portion for both Mac and PC which includes a 14-minute piece by David Shea and Robert Hampson (Main). Highly recommended.
Rating: 9 (MM)

YEHT MAE
Eam They (Metropolis CD)
I tried, I really did. I actually used to like Yeht Mae's material when I heard it. They were never a favorite or anything, but if I heard a track on the radio or a compilation, I generally liked it. *Eam They* is apparently a deliberate departure from their earlier electro sound, with the intention of telling a storyline about aliens. Personally, this all loses me as soon as this really bad voice effect comes in every song, sounding like some evil cartoon character singing these horrible rhyming lyrics. The music really isn't too bad... it sounds sort of dated for some reason, but other than that it's alright. The vocals unfortunately are so distracting that making it through this album is a challenge, one I don't recommend taking.
Rating: 5 (MM)

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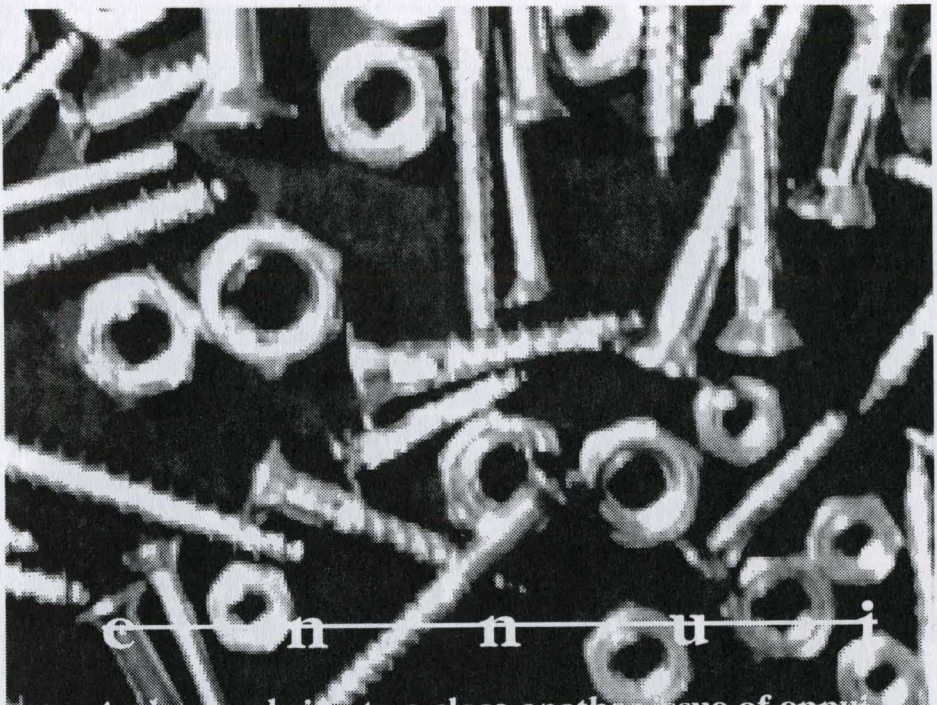

e n n u i

And so we bring to a close another issue of ~~ennui~~. Thanks to reader and label support we have begun to achieve some of our goals. With the last issue, we achieved a significant increase in circulation, and this time we were able to make the production a lot nicer than the xeroxing of the past. This is hopefully a trend that will continue as we look into the future and possibilities of being distributed to a wider audience. As always, we appreciate any contact we receive. Readers and labels are encouraged to get in touch!

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